

# Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing in Washington

*Annual Report*  
2008

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present data on a set of performance measures designed to assess the timeliness of dependency case processing in Washington's courts. This report was developed in response to RCW 13.34.820, in which the Washington State Legislature requested information about dependency cases that fail to meet statutory guidelines to achieve permanency for dependent children. In addition to meeting the Legislature's request, these performance measures and the structure of this report were developed to assist the court community in measuring case processing, identifying areas for improvement, and tracking progress on specific court improvement projects. Each of the measures has a basis in State or Federal law and is consistent with court performance measures suggested by the American Bar Association, the National Center for State Courts, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

The information analyzed in this report comes from all dependency and termination cases filed in Washington from January 1, 2002, through August 31, 2008, for which court records from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) could be matched with information from the Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration. Of the 38,858 dependency and termination cases filed during the study period, 99.7% were matched with Children's Administration data. Information relevant to each of the performance measures represents a subset of these matched cases. For each statewide measure, data is presented on the percentage of cases meeting the statutory requirement or goal as well as the length of time to the event for cases in which the event occurred.

This report also contains county-level data on the percentage of cases achieving the statutory standards over the past five years. County-level data, however, should be viewed with caution. Although standard procedures exist for entering data into the AOC's Superior Court Management and Information System (SCOMIS), local court procedures and data processes may significantly affect the reliability and validity of the data within a particular county. While significant efforts have been made over the past year to validate the data processes and the methods of analysis within each county, data validity cannot be assured in every instance. Considerable efforts are underway to improve data quality through the revision of pattern court forms, the addition of data elements into SCOMIS, and increased education and training of court staff in relation to dependency case processing.

It should also be noted that while the performance measures included in this report are generally construed as court performance measures, the timeliness of events within a dependency case is affected by all involved parties and agencies. While the courts may have considerable control over the timeliness of some of these events, such as the scheduling of hearings, the Children's Administration has greater control over others, such as the completion of an adoption. Attorneys, parents, service providers, and others impact the process as well. All parties and agencies must work in concert throughout the dependency case to ensure the timeliness of case events, limit the period children spend in foster care, and ultimately improve the lives of the children and their families.

## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Six performance measures of dependency case processing were examined; each measure has a basis in State or Federal law. Court data from the Administrative Office of the Courts was combined with child welfare data from the Children's Administration for all dependency and termination cases filed in the Washington since 2002. Case events were examined from January 1, 2004, through August 31, 2008.

- ***Fact-finding within 75 days of the dependency petition:***

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of dependency cases achieved fact-finding within the 75-day standard. The median number of days to fact-finding was 62. The length of time to fact-finding has increased slightly since 2005.

- ***Review hearings every six months:***

Over the past five years, the percentage of review hearings held within six months of the dependency petition or the previous review hearing has remained relatively stable at approximately 94%. The median length of time to the first review hearing was 4.1 months.

- ***Permanency planning hearing within 12 months of placement:***

In the 13 counties with data on permanency planning hearings, 82% of the cases met the time standard. The rate increased to 84% in 2005, but recently decreased to 77% in 2008. The median length of time to the permanency planning hearing across the study period was 10.5 months.

- ***Termination of parental rights petition filed before 15 months of out-of-home care:***

Of all dependency cases with either a TPR petition filed before 15 months of out-of-home care or overdue as of 15 months, 44% met the time standard (after excluding children living with relatives). Of those cases in which a TPR petition was filed, the median time to filing was 13.8 months. Younger children were much more likely to have a TPR petition filed in a timely manner.

- ***Permanency achieved before 15 months of out-of-home care:***

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of dependent children achieved permanency within 15 months of out-of-home care. The length of time in out-of-home care differed considerably, however, depending upon the type of outcome. For reunifications, the median was 10.6 months (64% timely), while children who were adopted, placed in guardianships, or reached the age of majority without permanency typically spent more than two years in foster care (medians = 30.1, 26.0, and 36.1 months, respectively).

The median time to reunification decreased slightly in 2008, while time in foster care to other final outcomes increased over the past few years. A substantially smaller percentage of Black children achieved permanency within 15 months of out-of-home care in comparison to the other racial/ethnic groups.

- ***Adoption completed within six months of the termination order:***

Approximately one-quarter (26%) of legally free children (guardianships excluded) had an adoption completed within six months of the termination order. The percentage of timely adoptions has decreased steadily over the past five years. Racial/ethnic minority children and older children were less likely to have an adoption completed in a timely manner.

**OBJECTIVE: FACT-FINDING WITHIN 75 DAYS**

- Measures: (1) Percent of cases with fact-finding within 75 days of the petition
- (2) Median number of days to fact-finding

RCW 13.34.070(1): *The fact-finding hearing on the petition shall be held no later than seventy-five days after the filing of the petition, unless exceptional reasons for a continuance are found.*

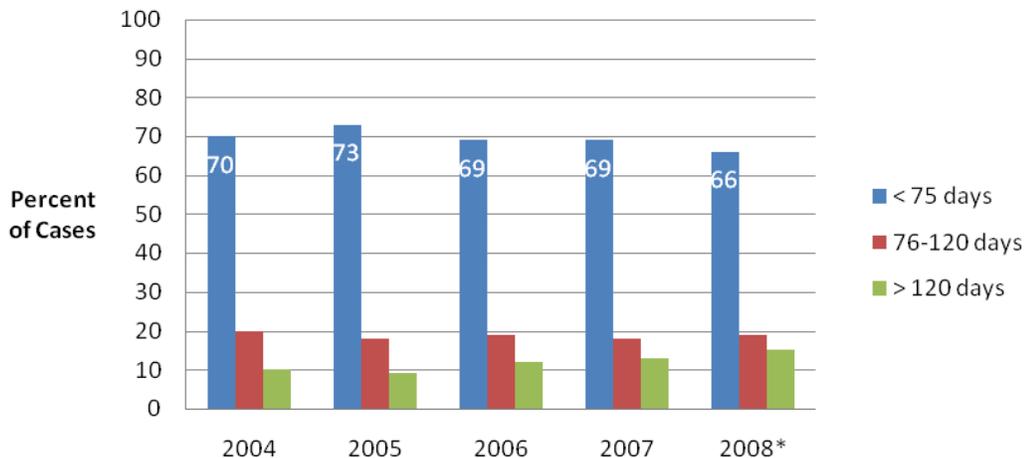
Fact-finding represents one of the first major judicial events in the dependency process, and significant delays to fact-finding may prolong court involvement and the amount of time children spend in foster care. To determine the length of time from the filing of the dependency petition to fact-finding, court data (from SCOMIS) were used to calculate the number of days to the first fact-finding hearing. In many cases, however, action is taken on the petition without a formal hearing. This may occur when parties stipulate to a finding of dependency and waive a fact-finding hearing, or when the case is dismissed prior to the hearing. Therefore, the length of time from the petition to the first order of dependency or the first order of dismissal was used as an imputed time-to-fact-finding interval for those cases without a fact-finding hearing documented in SCOMIS,

Exhibit 1 displays the percentage of dependency cases in which fact-finding occurred within 75 days of the petition (meeting the statutory requirement), as well as the percentage between 76 and 120 days, and the percentage after 120 days. Overall, of the 18,159 dependency cases with fact-finding between 2004 and August 2008, 69% met the 75-day standard, 19% were between 76 and 120 days, and 12% were after 120 days. The percentage meeting the time standard has decreased slightly over the past few years.

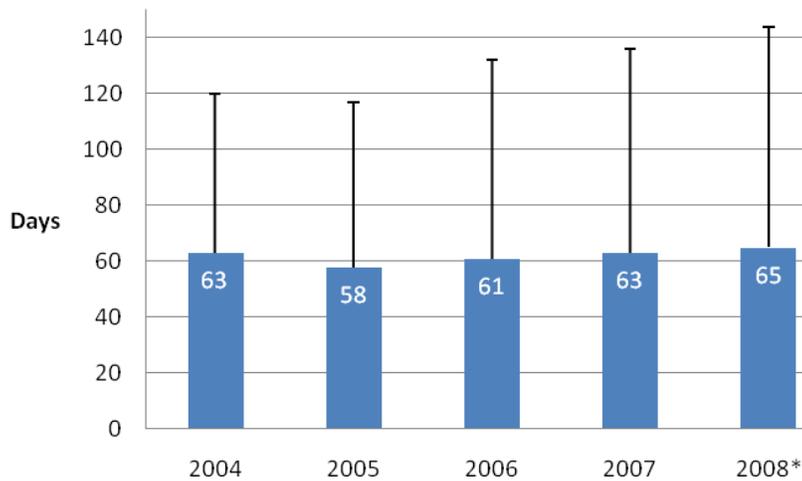
Exhibit 2 presents the median number of days to fact-finding and the number of days by which 90% of all cases achieved fact-finding (the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile). Over the past five years, the median length of time was 62 days, with 90% achieving fact-finding by 130 days. The median has increased by approximately two days per year since 2005.

Exhibit 3 presents the percentage of cases meeting the 75-day standard for the various demographic groups.

**Exhibit 1: Percent of Cases with Fact-Finding within 75 Days, between 76-120 Days, and after 120 Days of Petition**



**Exhibit 2: Median Number of Days from Petition to Fact-Finding (with 90th Percentile)**



**Exhibit 3: Percent of Cases with Fact-Finding within 75 Days of Petition By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age of Child at Filing**

	2004 (n=3,596)	2005 (n=3,819)	2006 (n=3,798)	2007 (n=4,048)	2008* (n=2,898)	'04-08 (N=18,159)
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
American Indian	67%	73%	64%	66%	67%	67%
Asian	69	49	70	55	59	60
Black	66	74	65	66	63	67
Hispanic	67	70	68	68	62	67
White	73	74	70	71	66	71
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	69	72	69	68	66	69
Male	71	73	68	70	66	70
<b>Age at Filing:</b>						
< 1	72	74	71	70	69	71
1-2	67	74	72	72	73	72
3-5	71	73	66	69	68	70
6-12	70	70	66	69	61	68
13-17	70	71	65	62	59	65
	70	70	69	69	66	69

\* through 8/31/08

**OBJECTIVE: REVIEW HEARINGS EVERY SIX MONTHS**

- Measures: (1) Percent of review hearings within six months
- (2) Percent of first review hearings within six months
- (3) Median number of days to first review hearing

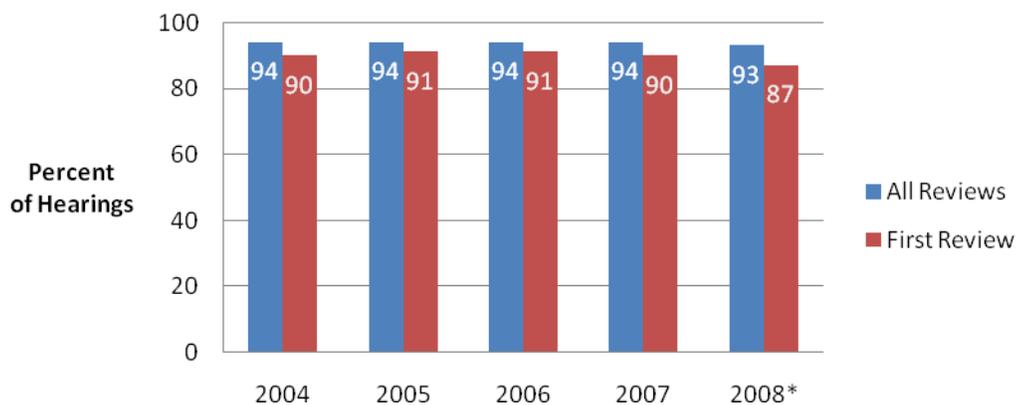
RCW 13.34.138(1): *Except for children whose cases are reviewed by a citizen review board under chapter 13.70 RCW, the status of all children found to be dependent shall be reviewed by the court at least every six months from the beginning date of the placement episode or the date dependency is established, whichever is first.*

The purpose of review hearings is to review the progress of the parties and determine whether court supervision should continue. Because the statutorily required due date for the first review hearing is problematic for some cases,<sup>1</sup> for the purposes of this report, the due date for the first review hearing was determined to be six months from the filing date of the dependency petition for children found to be dependent. Due dates for subsequent review hearings were determined to be six months from the previous review hearing. Dates for review hearings were obtained from SCOMIS court data.

Exhibit 4 presents the percentage of review hearings that were timely by the year in which the review hearings were held. Of the over 100,000 review hearings held in the past five years, 94% were held within six months of the petition or the previous review hearing. The rate has been stable over the past five years. The percentage of first review hearings timely was slightly lower (90%) and decreased slightly in 2008. The median length of time to the first review hearing was 126 days (4.1 months) across the study period, with a low of 119 days (3.9 months) in 2006 and a high of 135 days (4.4 months) in 2008 (see Exhibit 5).

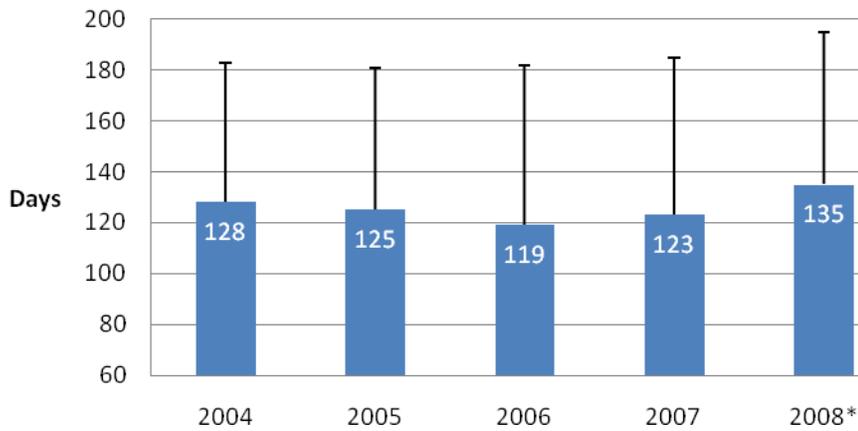
The rate of timely review hearings was similar across all of the demographic groups (see Exhibit 6).

**Exhibit 4. Percent of Review Hearings within Six Months**



<sup>1</sup> The time calculation for first dependency review hearing as specified in RCW 13.34.138 commences, in most cases, with the beginning date of the child's first out-of-home placement, but applies only once a child has been found to be dependent. Therefore, in cases in which the length of time from the beginning date of the placement episode to the date of dependency is more than six months, it is not possible to conduct a review hearing within the statutory timeframe. Cases in which the review hearing due date is shortly after the date of dependency also pose difficulties for the courts and the involved parties.

**Exhibit 5. Median Number of Days to First Review Hearing (with 90th Percentile)**



**Exhibit 6: Percent of Review Hearings within Six Months By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age of Child at Filing**

	2004 (n=15,350)	2005 (n=18,739)	2006 (n=21,608)	2007 (n=23,691)	2008* (n=18,684)	'04-08 (N=98,072)
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
American Indian	95%	94%	93%	94%	92%	93%
Asian	97	92	92	96	93	94
Black	94	96	94	96	94	95
Hispanic	92	94	93	94	93	93
White	94	94	94	94	93	94
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	94	94	94	94	93	94
Male	94	94	94	94	93	94
<b>Age at Filing:</b>						
< 1	95	95	95	94	93	94
1-2	94	94	94	94	94	94
3-5	94	94	94	95	94	94
6-12	94	94	93	93	92	93
13-17	93	94	93	94	92	93
	94	94	94	94	93	94

\* through 8/31/08

**OBJECTIVE: PERMANENCY PLANNING HEARING WITHIN 12 MONTHS**

- Measures: (1) Percent of cases with first permanency planning hearing within 12 months of placement  
(2) Median number of days from placement to first permanency planning hearing

RCW 13.34.145(3): *A permanency planning hearing shall be held in all cases where the child has remained in out-of-home care for at least nine months and an adoption decree, guardianship order, or permanent custody order has not previously been entered. The hearing shall take place no more than twelve months following commencement of the current placement episode.*<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of a permanency planning hearing is to review the permanency plan for the child, inquire into the welfare of the child and progress of the case, and reach decisions regarding the permanent placement of the child. In order to calculate a due date for a permanency planning hearing, Children's Administration CAMIS data on placement episodes were used to determine the beginning date of the first out-of-home placement episode, the length of each episode within a dependency case, and whether each episode consisted of in-home or out-of-home care. The length of time in out-of-home care was then calculated to determine if the requisite nine months of out-of-home care had occurred, and, if so, the due date for the permanency planning hearing was set at 12 months from the beginning date of the first placement episode.<sup>3</sup>

The date of the permanency planning hearing was determined from the AOC's SCOMIS data. However, because the entry of the hearing code used to document the permanency planning hearing was optional during the study period, data were available for only 13 counties that used the code reliably.<sup>4</sup>

Exhibit 7 shows the percentage of cases in which the first permanency planning hearing occurred within 12 months of the first placement episode (meeting the statutory requirement), as well as the percentage between 12 and 15 months, and after 15 months. Of the 6,511 cases in which a permanency planning hearing was documented, 82% met the time standard. The rate increased in to 84% in 2005, but recently decreased in to 77% in 2008. The median number of days to the hearing across the study period was 319 (see Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 9 presents the percentage of cases with timely permanency planning hearings for the various demographic groups. Only slight variation existed within demographic categories. The largest discrepancy was between Asian children (87% timely) and Black children (77% timely).

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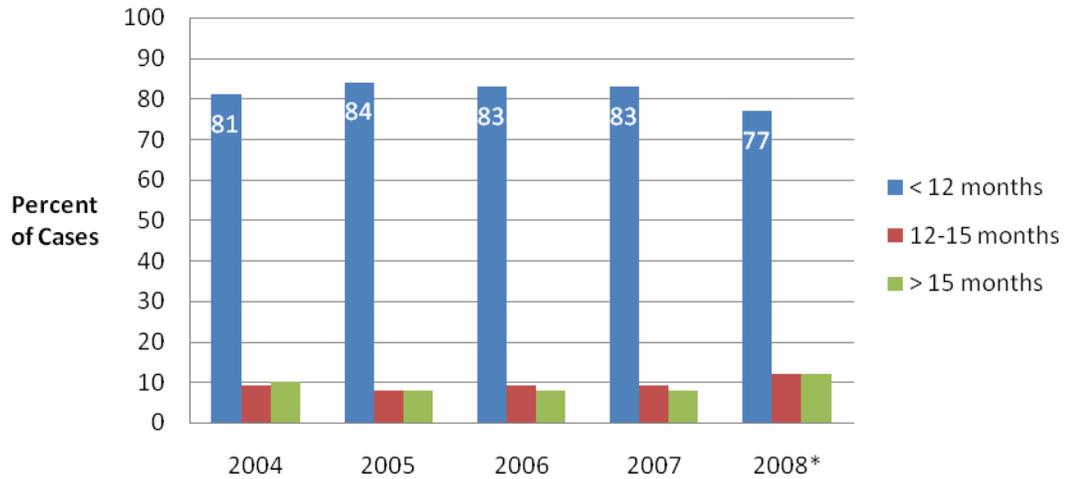
<sup>2</sup> The term *current placement episode* appears to have a different meaning in the RCWs in comparison to Children's Administration terminology. RCW 13.34.030 defines a *current placement episode* as "the period of time that begins with the most recent date that the child was removed from the home of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian for purposes of placement in out-of-home care and continues until: (a) The child returns home; (b) an adoption decree, a permanent custody order, or guardianship order is entered; or (c) the dependency is dismissed, whichever occurs first." It is believed that if a child returns home, but is subsequently re-removed within the same dependency case, it is the intent of the statute for this to be considered the same *current placement episode*.

With respect to Children's Administration terminology, however, children can have multiple placement episodes consisting of either in-home or out-of-home care within one dependency case. Re-removal would constitute a separate and more current placement episode. For the purposes of this report, we refer to the first placement episode or first out-of-home placement in lieu of the phrase *current placement episode*.

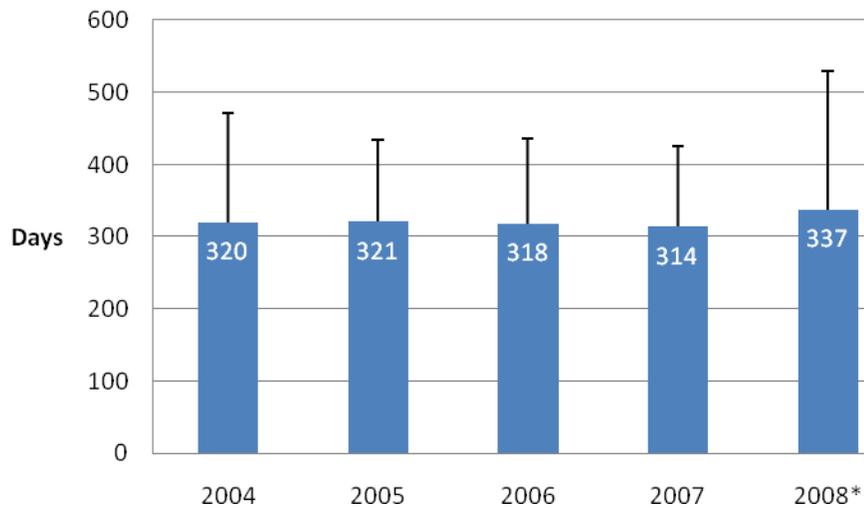
<sup>3</sup> Cases in which a permanency planning hearing was held more than 12 months from the beginning of the first placement episode, but in which the child had not been in out-of-home care for at least nine months, were excluded from the analyses.

<sup>4</sup> The counties with available data were Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, King, Mason, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom.

**Exhibit 7. Percent of Cases with a Permanency Planning Hearing within 12 months, between 12-15 Months, and after 15 Months**



**Exhibit 8. Median Number of Days to First Permanency Planning Hearing (with 90th Percentile)**



**Exhibit 9: Percent of First Permanency Planning Hearings within 12 Months  
By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age of Child at Filing**

	2004 (n=1,321)	2005 (n=1,276)	2006 (n=1,392)	2007 (n=1,448)	2008* (n=1,074)	'04-08 (N=6,511)
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
American Indian	78%	84%	85%	83%	76%	81%
Asian	89	78	88	97	77	87
Black	83	72	80	75	71	77
Hispanic	81	81	84	80	72	79
White	80	88	83	86	79	83
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	82	83	82	84	74	81
Male	80	84	84	83	79	82
<b>Age at Filing:</b>						
< 1	81	86	85	84	77	83
1-2	82	83	86	84	78	83
3-5	82	82	82	81	78	81
6-12	78	86	82	83	77	81
13-17	81	78	78	83	70	78
	81	84	83	83	77	82

\* through 8/31/08

## OBJECTIVE: TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS PETITION FILED BEFORE 15 MONTHS OF OUT-OF-HOME CARE

- Measures: (1) Percent of cases with Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition filed before 15 months of out-of-home care  
(2) Median number of months of out-of-home care to TPR petition

The Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (United States Public Law 105-89, section 103) “requires states to initiate or join proceedings to terminate parental rights for certain children in foster care,” including “the case of a child who has been in foster care under the responsibility of the State for 15 of the most recent 22 months,” unless the child is being cared for by a relative, there is a compelling reason why termination would not be in the best interest of the child, or when the State has failed to offer the necessary services to the family.

CAMIS data on the duration and type of placement were used to calculate due dates for the filing of termination petitions, and SCOMIS data were used to determine the actual filing date of the TPR petition if one had been filed. Out-of-home days were calculated from the beginning date of the first out-of-home placement episode for each dependency case, and the due date was set as the date the child reached 15 months of out-of-home care.<sup>5</sup> Cases in which the child had not been in out-of-home care for 15 months were excluded from the analyses unless a termination petition had been filed. In addition, Indian children were excluded from these measures as Indian children are often excepted from the ASFA standard.

Of the 11,155 non-Indian dependent children that had an associated termination case or were due for a termination case from 2004-2008, 34% had a termination petition filed prior to 15 months of out-of-home care. However, of the 66% that failed to meet the 15-month timeframe, one-third (34%) were living with a relative and were exempt from the statute.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, of the 8,739 dependency cases with a TPR petition either due or filed, 44% had a TPR petition filed prior to 15 months, 19% had a TPR petition filed after 15 months, and 37% had no TPR petition filed. The percentage of cases with timely TPR petitions filed is presented in Exhibit 10.

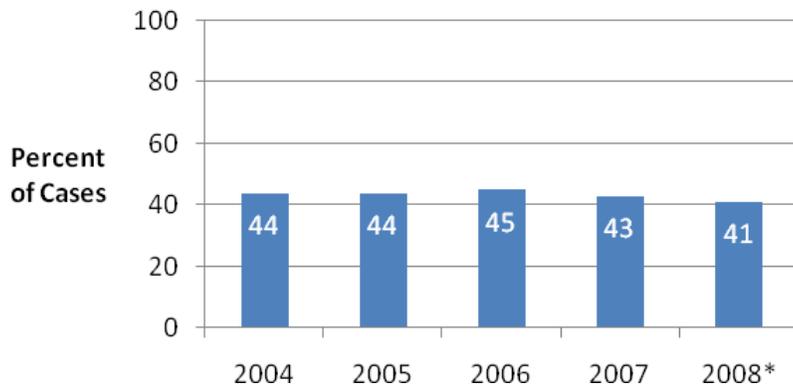
For those cases in which a TPR petition was filed, the median number of months of out-of-home care to the petition was 13.8. Ninety percent (90%) of the TPR petitions were filed within 25.7 months of out-of-home care (see Exhibit 11). The median length of time in foster care to the petition increased slightly from 2005 through 2007, then decreased in 2008.

With respect to the demographic groups, cases involving younger children were much more likely to have a TPR petition filed within 15 months. For children under the age of one year at the time of the dependency filing, 68% had a timely TPR petition filed. However, only 27% of 6-12 year-olds and 4% of teenagers had a TPR petition filed by 15 months of out-of-home care (see Exhibit 12).

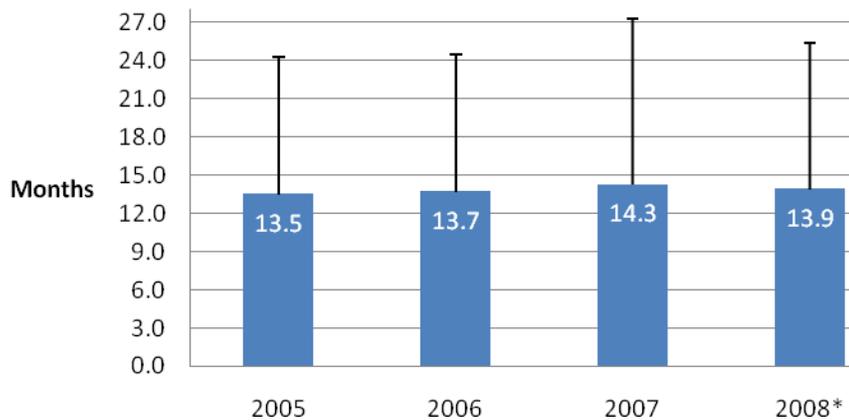
<sup>5</sup> Federal regulations state that a child is considered to have entered foster care on the earlier of a judicial finding of abuse or neglect or 60 days from the date the child is removed from the home, unless the State chooses to use an earlier date such as the date the child is physically removed from the home. In keeping with timelines set forth in RCW 13.34, these measures consider entry into foster care as the date the child is removed from the home.

<sup>6</sup> It could not be determined from the data if either of the other good cause exceptions applied. Therefore, it is possible that a considerable proportion of the cases that failed the 15-month timeframe may have been exempt. Almost half (46%) of the children who were overdue for a TPR petition were eventually reunified, suggesting that termination of parental rights was not in the best interests of the child.

**Exhibit 10. Percent of Cases with TPR Petition Filed before 15 Months of Out-of-Home Care**



**Exhibit 11. Median Number of Out-of-Home Months to TPR Petition (with 90th Percentile)**



Note: Data were not available prior to 2005 given the length of time necessary from the beginning of the study period (2002) to capture nearly all TPR filings.

**Exhibit 12: Percent of TPR Petitions Filed before 15 Months of Out-of-Home Care  
By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age of Child at Filing**

	2004 (n=1,727)	2005 (n=1,821)	2006 (n=2,061)	2007 (n=1,922)	2008* (n=1,208)	'04-08 (N=8,739)
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
Asian	40%	53%	41%	47%	33%	42%
Black	40	43	45	42	41	42
Hispanic	41	41	50	42	47	44
White	45	43	44	43	40	43
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	44	44	46	44	43	44
Male	44	44	45	42	40	43
<b>Age at Filing:</b>						
< 1	68	72	68	65	68	68
1-2	53	50	50	49	46	50
3-5	48	43	47	45	42	45
6-12	28	26	29	26	27	27
13-17	3	2	8	5	3	4
	44	44	45	43	41	44

\* through 8/31/08

## OBJECTIVE: PERMANENCY ACHIEVED BEFORE 15 MONTHS OF OUT-OF-HOME CARE

- Measures: (1) Percent of cases achieving permanency within 15 months of out-of-home care  
(2) Median number of months of out-of-home care to final outcome  
(3) Percent of reunifications before 15 months, between 15-24 months, and after 24 months of out-of-home care

RCW 13.34.145(1)(c): *Permanency planning goals should be achieved at the earliest possible date, preferably before the child has been in out-of-home care for fifteen months.*

The goals of state and federal child welfare laws are to provide children with safe, nurturing, and permanent living situations as quickly as possible. Although there is no specific statutory time requirement for achieving permanency, the Washington State Legislature has set a goal of achieving permanency before 15 months in out-of-home care. To measure time to permanency, Children's Administration (CAMIS) data were used identify the beginning date of the child's first out-of-home placement episode associated with the dependency case and the end date of the child's final placement episode (i.e., the final outcome date). Final outcomes, including both permanent outcomes (reunifications, adoptions, guardianships) and non-permanent outcomes (reached age of majority), were also taken from CAMIS. The number of months of out-of-home care was calculated between these two dates, and a permanency due date was set as the date the child reached 15 months of out-of-home care.

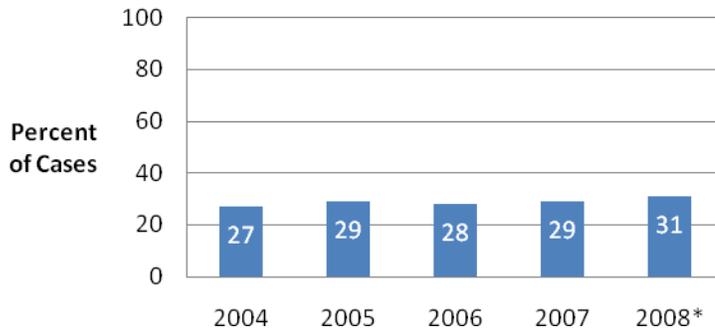
From 2004-2008, 28% of dependent children achieved permanency within 15 months of out-of-home care, while 72% either achieved permanency after 15 months, were overdue and still in care, or turned 18 without achieving permanency (see Exhibit 13). The median number of months of out-of-home care to a final outcome for all groups from 2006-2008 was 20.8. However, the length of time differed considerably depending upon the type of outcome.<sup>7</sup> For reunifications, the median was 10.6 months of out-of-home care, while the medians for adoptions, guardianships, and those children who reached the age of majority without permanency were all over two years (30.1, 26.0, and 36.1 months, respectively). The median out-of-home months to reunification decreased slightly in 2008 (by approximately one month) in comparison to 2006 and 2007, while the out-of-home months to the other final outcomes all increased over the past few years (see Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 15 examines reunifications more closely and presents the percentage of reunifications that occurred within three different timeframes. From 2006-2008, 64% of reunifications met the 15-month permanency goal, 21% occurred between 15 and 24 months, and 15% of children spent more than two years in out-of-home care prior to permanent reunification.

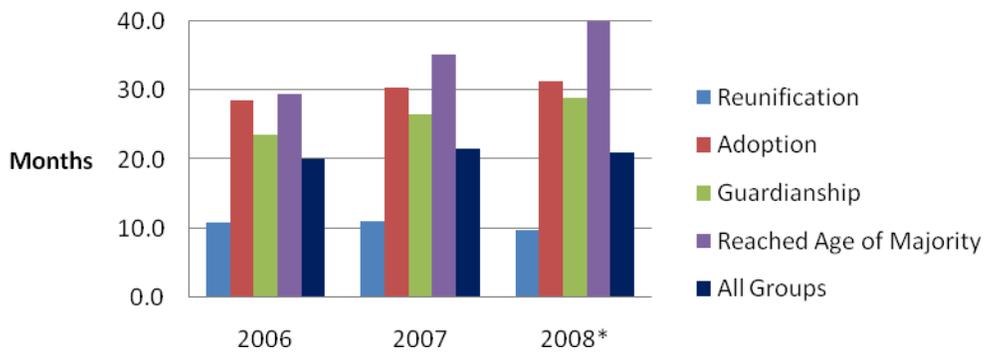
Exhibit 16 presents the percentage of cases for all outcomes meeting the 15-month goal for the demographic groups. A substantially smaller percentage of Black children achieved permanency within 15 months of out-of-home care in comparison to the other racial/ethnic groups. This disparity has been consistent over the past several years, although the level of disparity decreased slightly.

<sup>7</sup> The calculation of out-of-home months differs in an important respect for reunifications versus other permanency plans. In reunifications, once the child is returned home the out-of-home months stop accruing even though supervision often continues and the case is not dismissed for several months. For other plans, such as adoptions, the child may be living with his or her adoptive family for several months before the adoption is finalized, but the out-of-home months continue accruing until the adoption is completed.

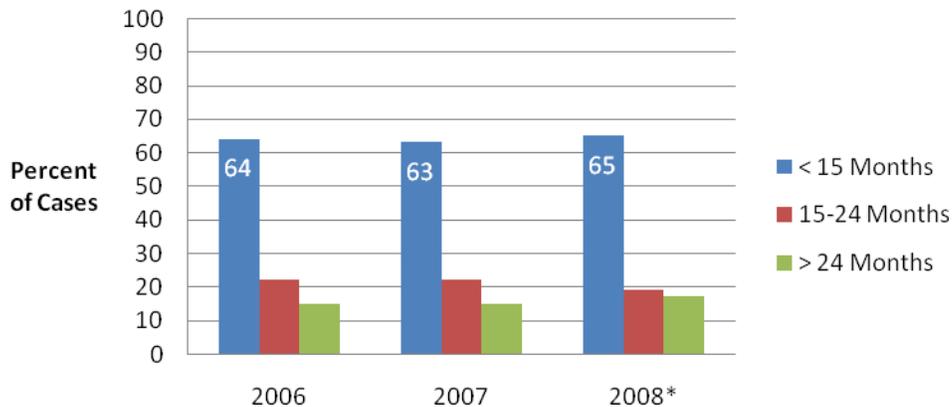
**Exhibit 13. Percent of Cases Achieving Permanency Before 15 Months of Out-of-Home Care**



**Exhibit 14. Median Number of Months of Out-of-Home Care to Final Outcome**



**Exhibit 15. Percent of Reunifications before 15 Months, between 15-24 Months, and after 24 Months of Out-of-Home Care**



**Exhibit 16: Percent of Cases Achieving Permanency before 15 Months of Out-of-Home Care By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age of Child at Filing**

	2004 (n=3,081)	2005 (n=3,595)	2006 (n=3,999)	2007 (n=3,986)	2008* (n=2,868)	'04-08 (N=17,529)
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
American Indian	29%	28%	22%	29%	27%	27%
Asian	40	36	36	35	26	35
Black	14	18	21	19	23	19
Hispanic	28	32	34	26	33	31
White	28	30	28	30	33	30
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	26	29	27	29	31	29
Male	28	28	28	28	31	28
<b>Age at Filing:</b>						
< 1	25	28	27	26	25	26
1-2	21	28	26	28	31	27
3-5	31	29	29	29	34	30
6-12	28	29	29	30	36	30
13-17	28	30	26	33	28	29
	27	29	28	29	31	28

\* through 8/31/08

Notes: Exhibits 13 and 16 include all dependency cases which achieved permanency within 15 months of out-of-home care or had not achieved permanency by the 15-month due date, regardless of the current status of the case (i.e., open or closed) or the eventual final outcome. Data are presented by the year of the due date. Exhibits 14 and 15 only include cases in which a final outcome was achieved and the child had exited care. Cases in which the child died or was transferred to other authorities prior to exiting care were excluded from the analyses. Data were not available prior to 2006 given the length of time necessary from the beginning of the study period (2002) to capture nearly all final outcomes. Data are presented by the year of the final outcome.

## OBJECTIVE: ADOPTION COMPLETED WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF TERMINATION ORDER

- Measures: (1) Percent of cases with adoption completed within six months of the termination order  
(2) Median number of months to adoption completion

RCW 13.34.145(1)(c): *In cases where parental rights have been terminated, the child is legally free for adoption, and adoption has been identified as the primary permanency planning goal, it shall be a goal to complete the adoption within six months of the termination order.*

In order to determine the percentage of cases that achieved the goal of completing the adoption within six months of the termination order, for each termination case identified in SCOMIS, a due date for a completed adoption was set at six months from the date the child became legally free.<sup>8</sup> Children's Administration (CAMIS) data were used to identify the legally free date as well as the date the adoption was completed. The date for the completed adoption was considered to be the end date of the child's final placement episode.

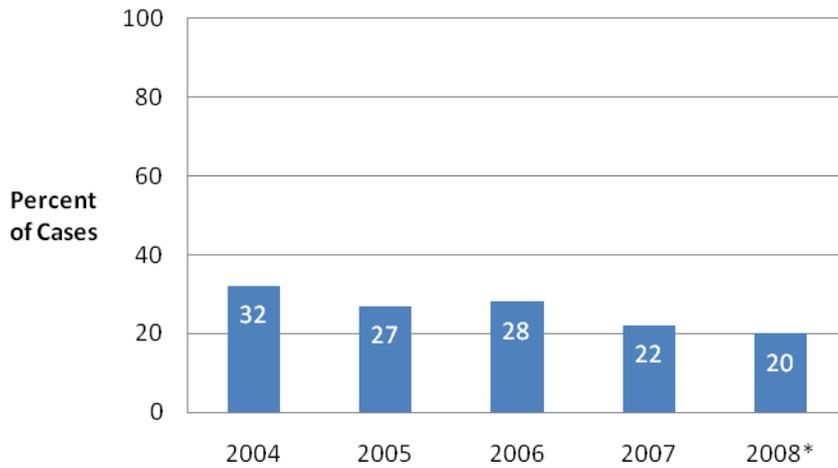
Exhibit 17 presents the percentage of cases in which the adoption was completed within six months. Of the 6,262 legally free children, 26% had their adoption completed in a timely manner. The percentage of timely adoptions has decreased over the past five years, from a high of 32% in 2004 to a low of 20% in 2008. In addition, considerable variation existed among the cases. Half of all children had their adoption completed within approximately nine months (median = 9.2 months), but it took two years for the next 40% of children to have their adoptions completed (90<sup>th</sup> percentile = 23.9 months). The median number of months and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for each of the past four years are presented in Exhibit 18.

Exhibit 19 presents the percentage of timely adoptions for the demographic groups. With respect to race/ethnicity, Black children generally had lower rates of timely adoptions in comparison to the other racial/ethnic groups from 2004-2007. In 2008, however, the rate for Black children was similar to other minority children, yet still lower than White children. The reduction in racial/ethnic differences, however, is the result of a faster rate of decline in other groups while the rate for Black children has remained relatively stable. The most pronounced difference in demographic groups is related to the age of the child at the time of the termination petition. The percentage of timely adoptions decreased steadily across age groups, from 45% for children under the age of one to just 8% for teenagers (see Exhibit 19).

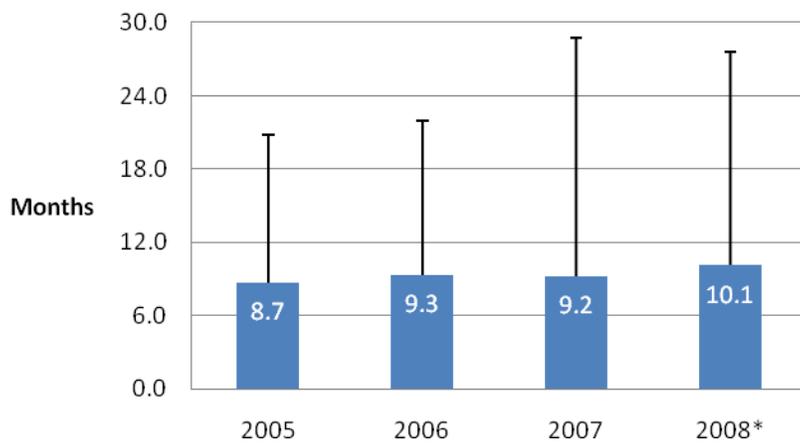
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<sup>8</sup> Because CAMIS data on the child's most recent primary permanency planning goal has questionable reliability, a due date for a completed adoption was calculated for all cases in which a child became legally free, except those in which the child was placed in a guardianship, transferred to other authorities, or cases in which the termination was appealed to the Court of Appeals. Analyses were also conducted on a smaller subset of cases in which adoption was indicated as the primary permanency goal (with the above exceptions), and the results were identical to those presented in this report.

**Exhibit 17. Percent of Cases with Adoption Completed within Six Months of Termination Order**



**Exhibit 18. Median Number of Months to Adoption Completion (with 90th Percentile)**



**Exhibit 19: Percent of Cases with Adoption Completed within Six Months of the Termination Order By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age of Child at Filing**

	2004 (n=1,197)	2005 (n=1,269)	2006 (n=1,286)	2007 (n=1,435)	2008* (n=1,075)	04-08 (N=6,262)
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
American Indian	26%	21%	23%	17%	17%	21%
Asian	53	13	17	30	8	22
Black	19	16	12	15	16	15
Hispanic	32	38	30	19	12	25
White	34	29	32	24	23	28
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	31	26	27	21	21	25
Male	33	28	29	22	18	26
<b>Age at Filing</b>						
< 1	44	54	45	39	44	45
1-2	42	28	33	27	23	31
3-5	28	24	25	16	13	21
6-12	14	14	15	12	10	13
13-17	6	6	15	3	10	8
	32	27	28	22	20	26

\* through 8/31/08

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

**Exhibit 20: Demographic Characteristics of Dependent Children Entering the Courts by Year of Dependency Petition**

	2004 (n=4,009)	2005 (n=4,393)	2006 (n=4,256)	2007 (n=4,530)	2008* (n=2,680)	04-08 (N=19,868)
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
American Indian	12%	13%	12%	15%	12%	13%
Asian	3	2	3	3	2	3
Black	11	11	13	11	14	12
Hispanic	13	11	13	13	10	12
White	58	60	57	55	55	57
Other/Unknown	3	3	3	4	7	4
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	49	50	51	50	47	50
Male	51	50	49	51	53	51
<b>Age at Filing:</b>						
< 1	25	28	29	27	26	27
1-2	15	17	15	16	17	16
3-5	19	17	16	17	17	17
6-12	28	26	26	27	28	27
13-17	13	12	13	14	13	13

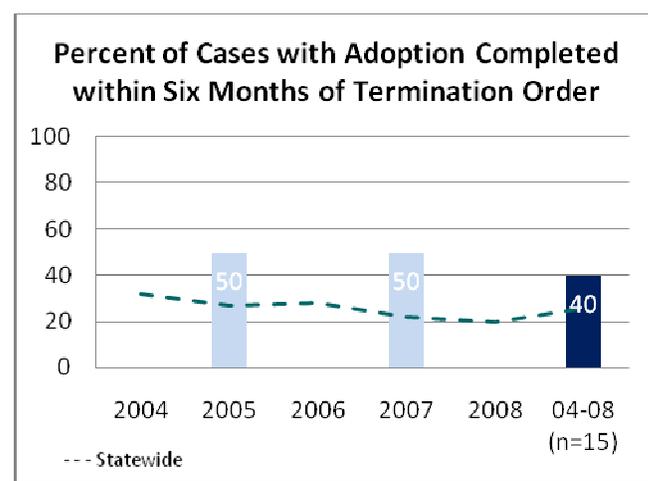
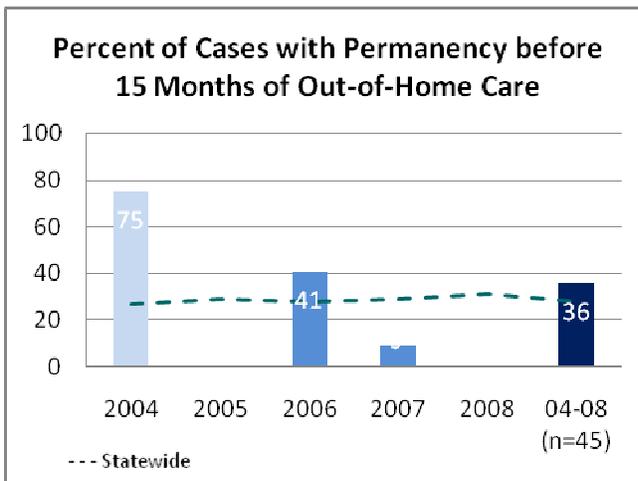
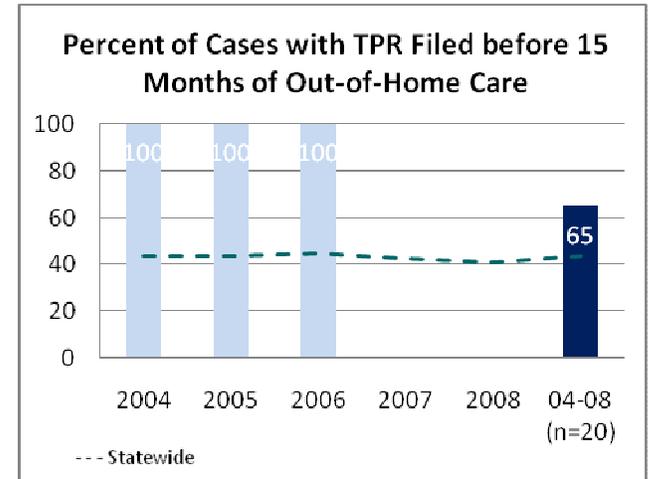
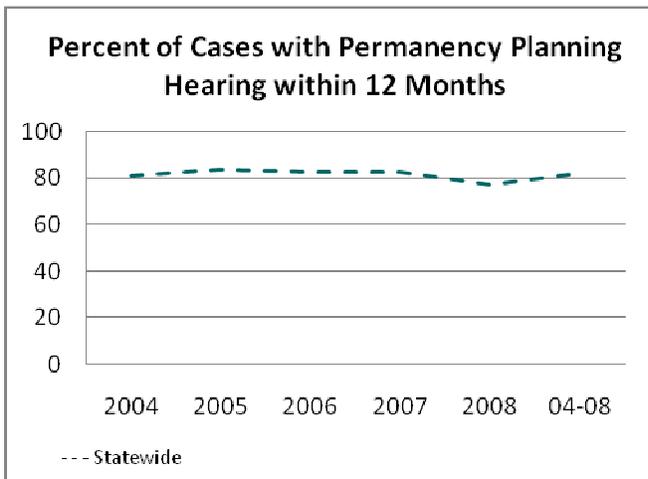
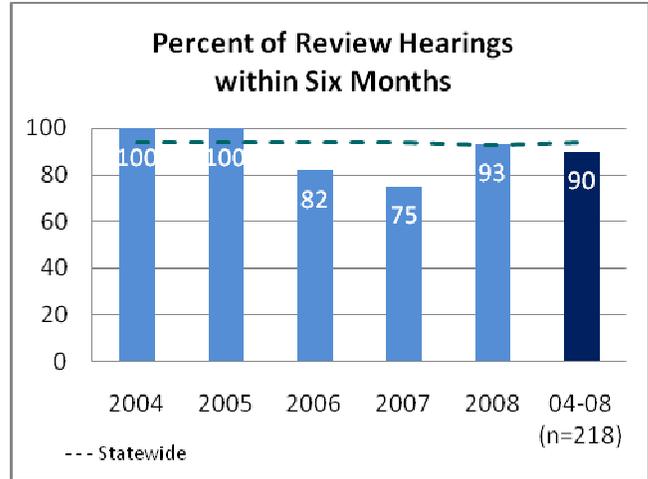
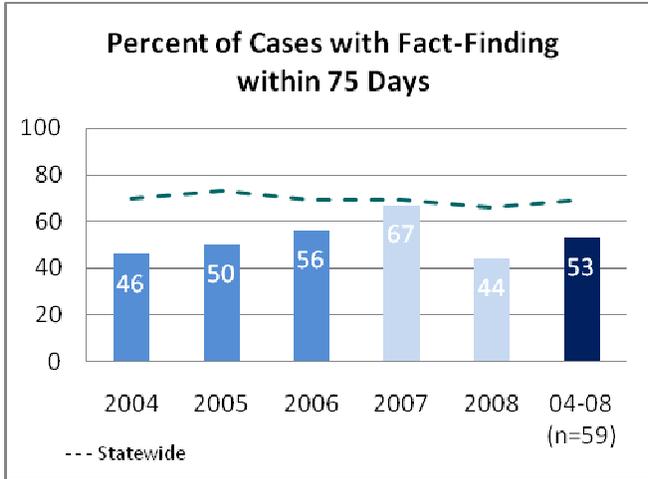
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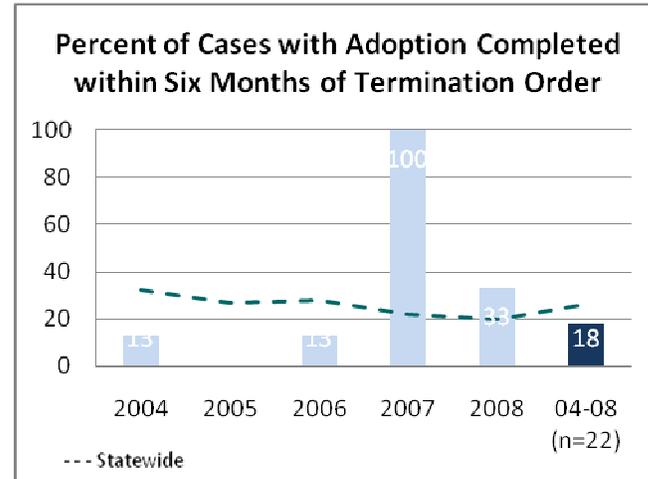
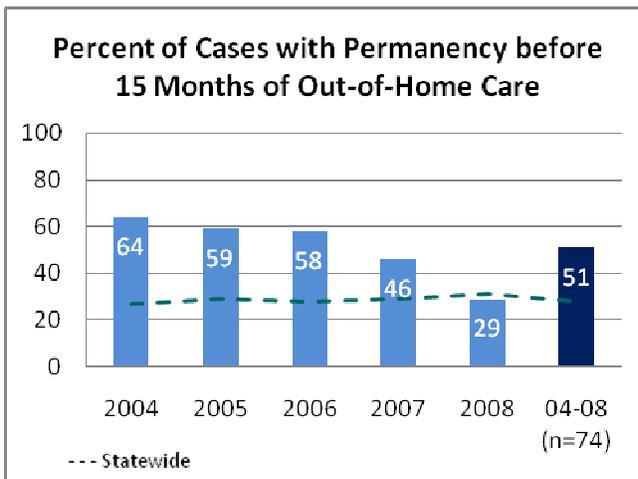
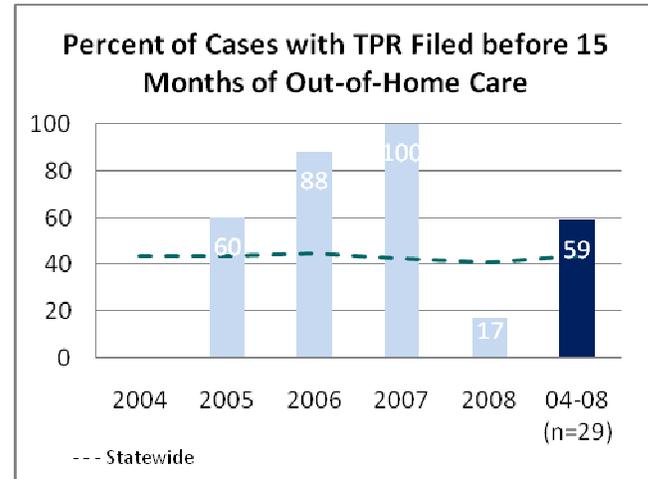
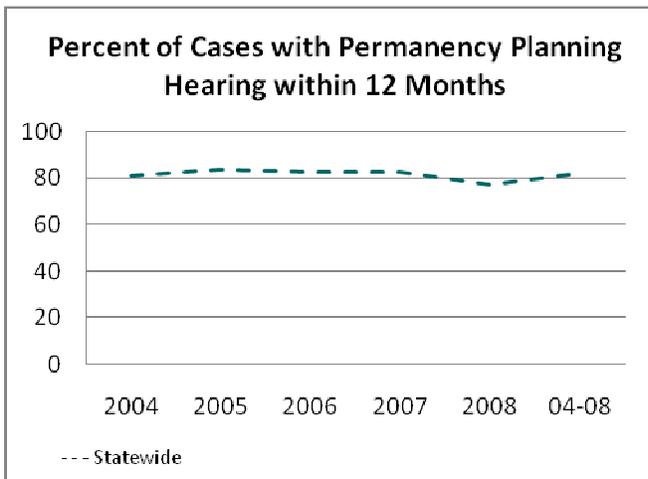
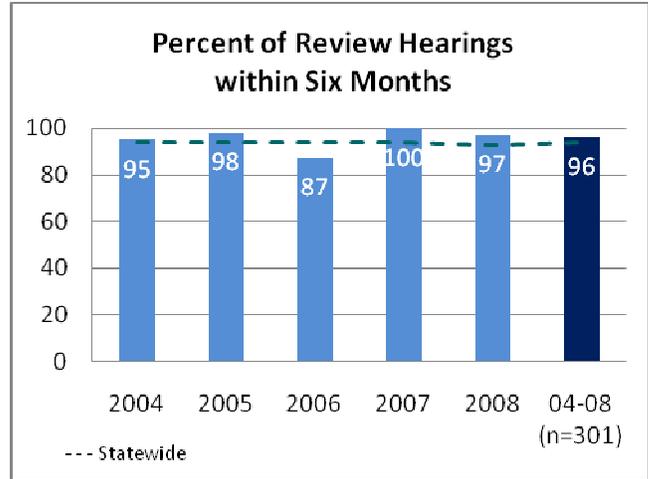
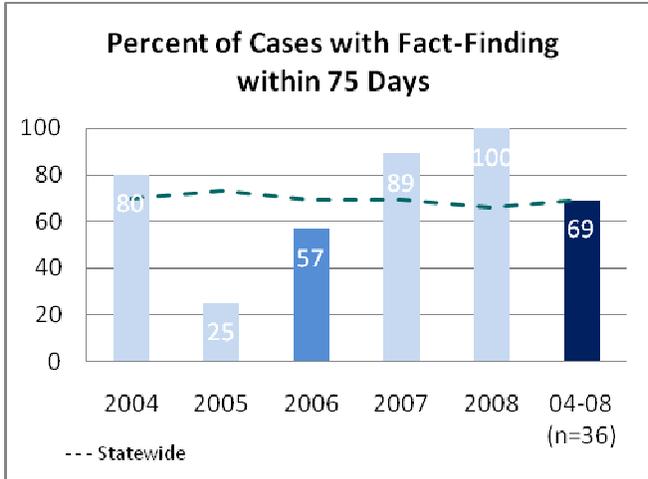
## PERFORMANCE MEASURES BY COUNTY

- (1) Percent of cases with fact-finding within 75 days
- (2) Percent of review hearings within six months
- (3) Percent of cases with permanency planning hearing within 12 months of placement
- (4) Percent of cases with TPR petition filed before 15 months of out-of-home care
- (5) Percent of cases with permanency before 15 months of out-of-home care
- (6) Percent of cases with adoption completed within six months of the termination order

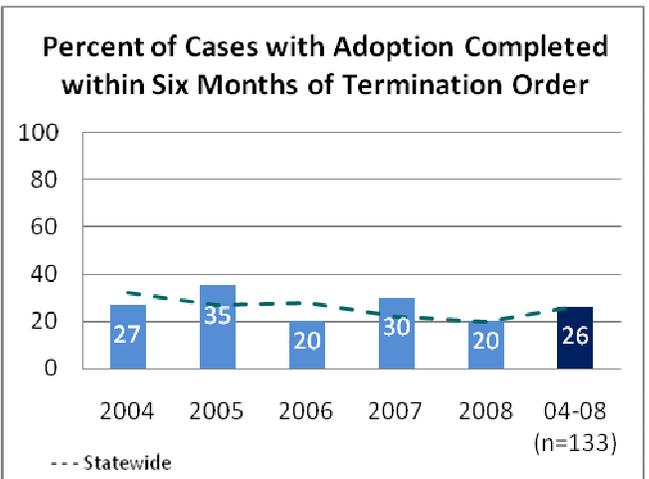
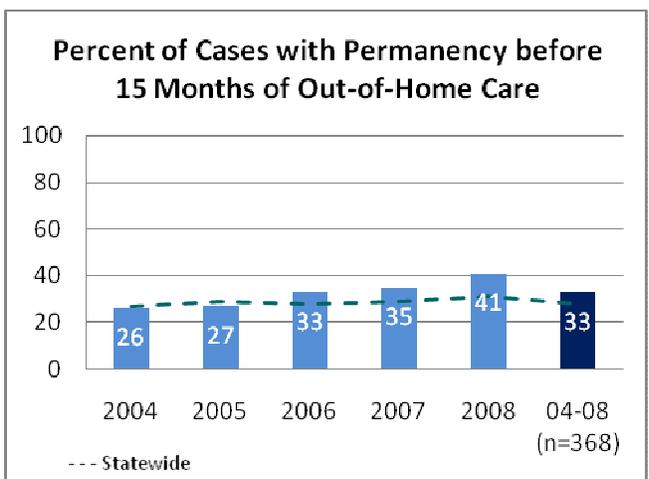
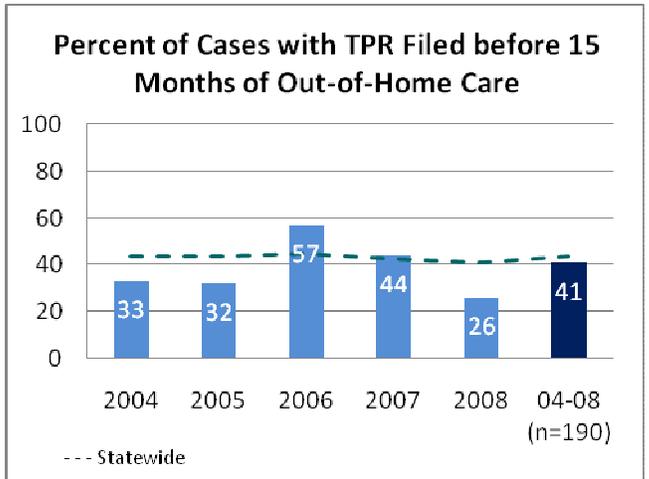
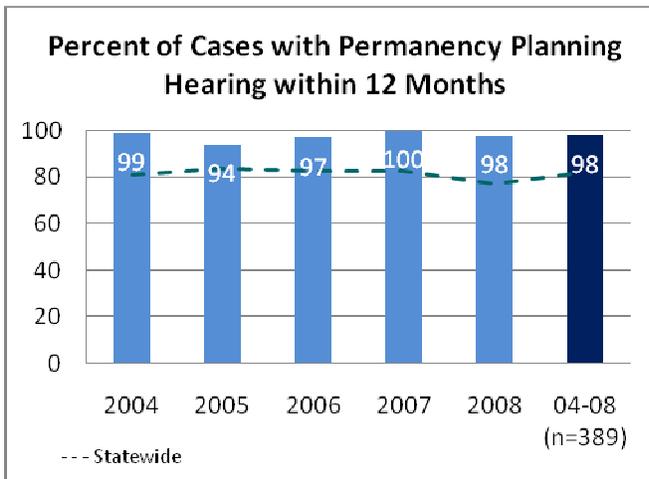
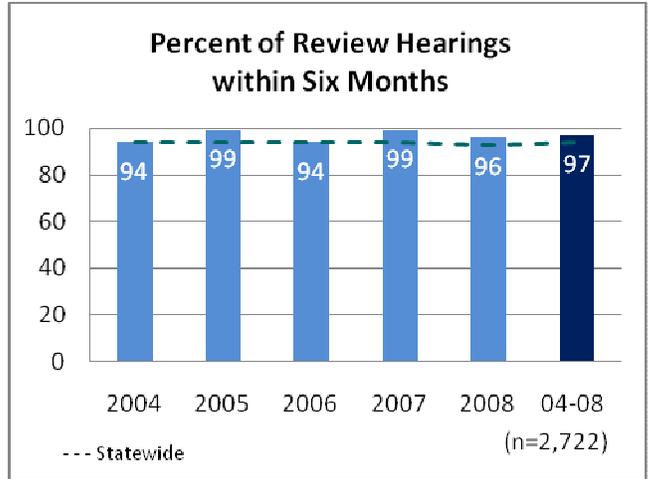
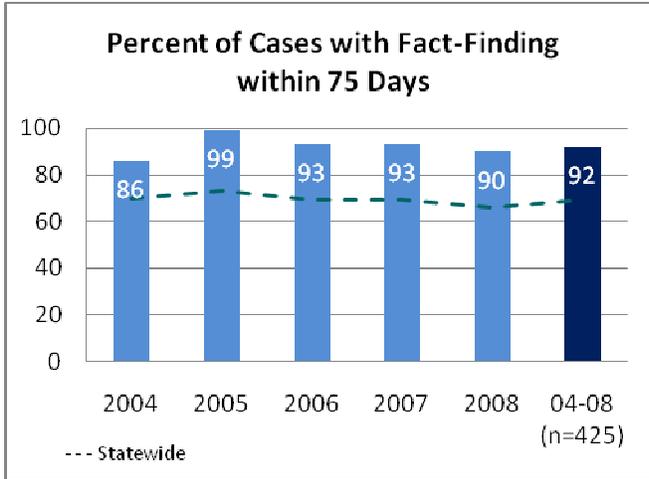
Note: Statistics for 2008 include case events through August 31, 2008.



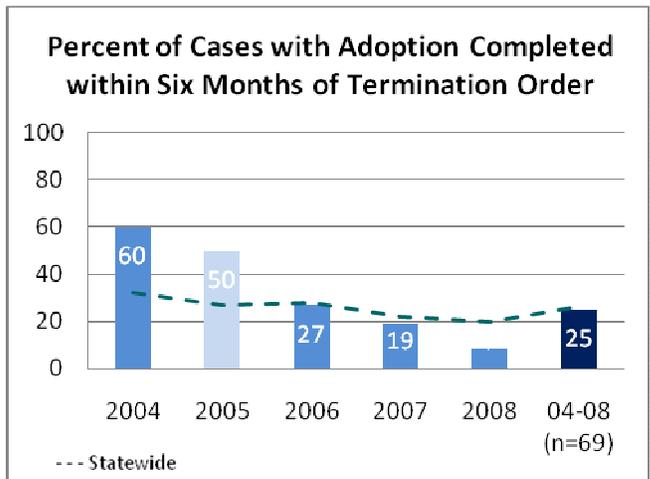
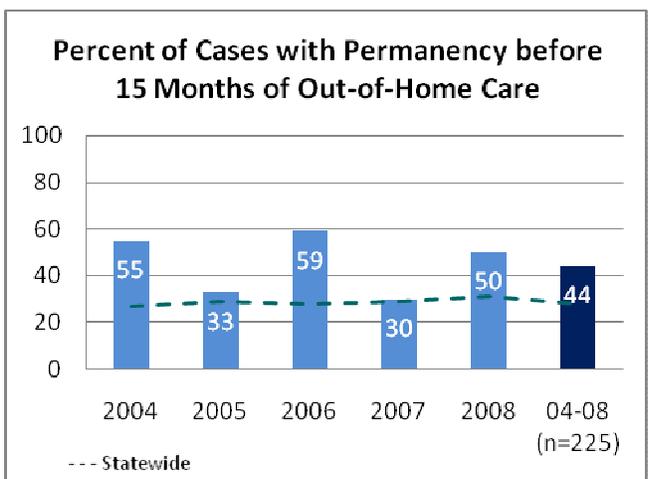
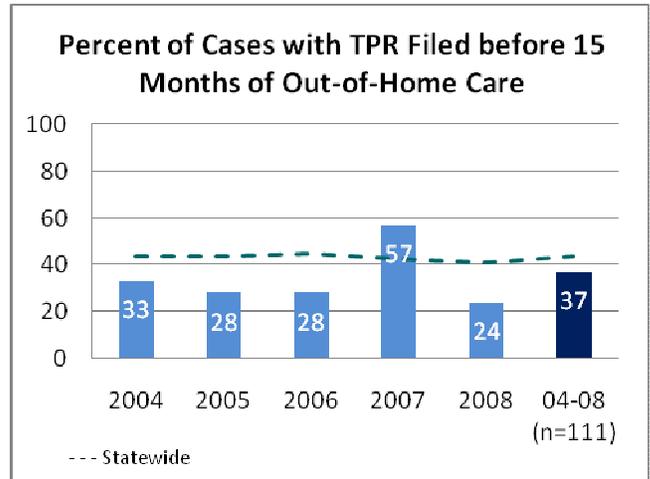
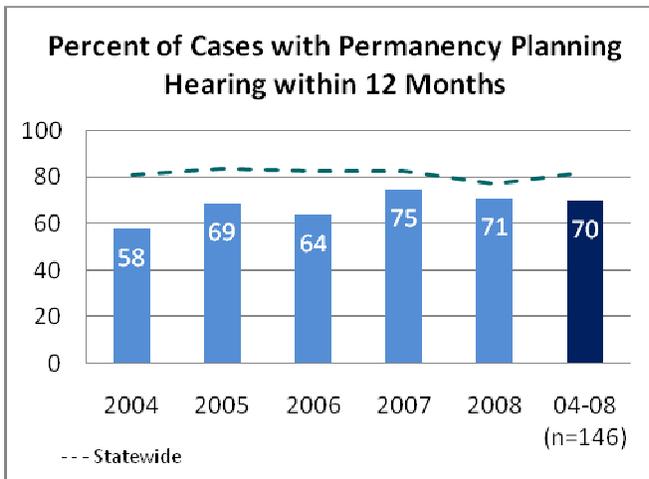
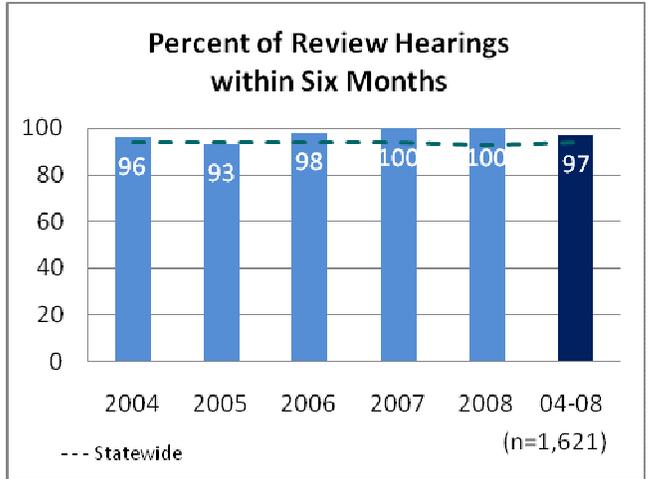
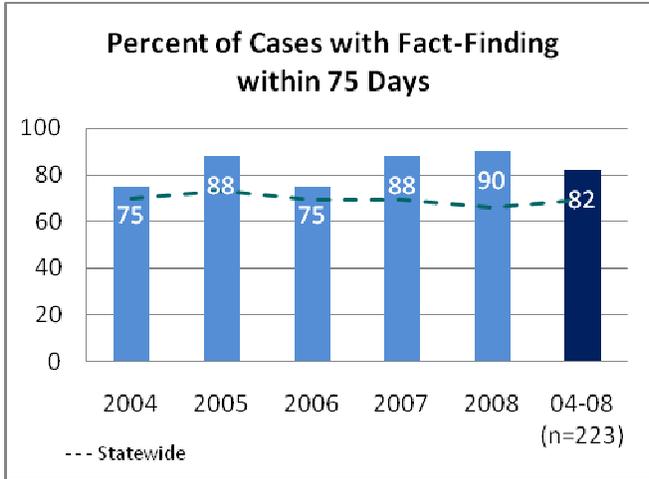
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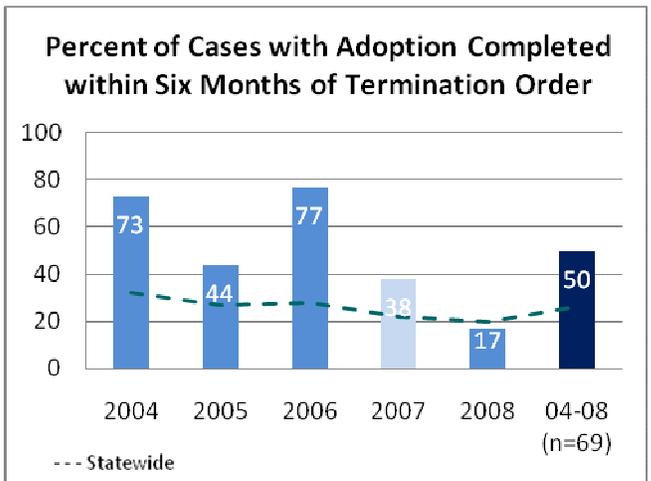
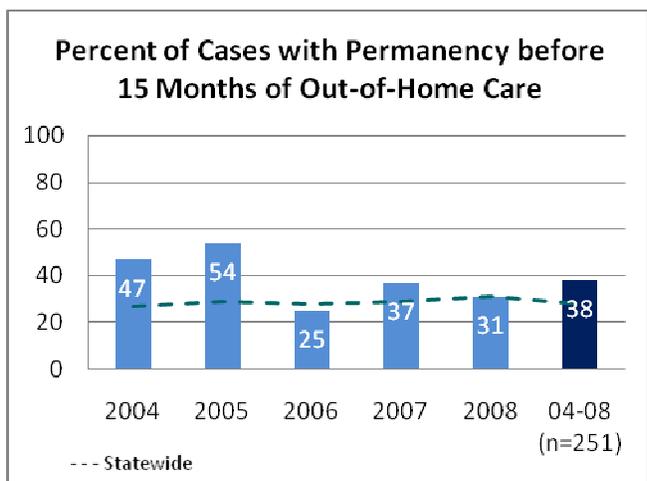
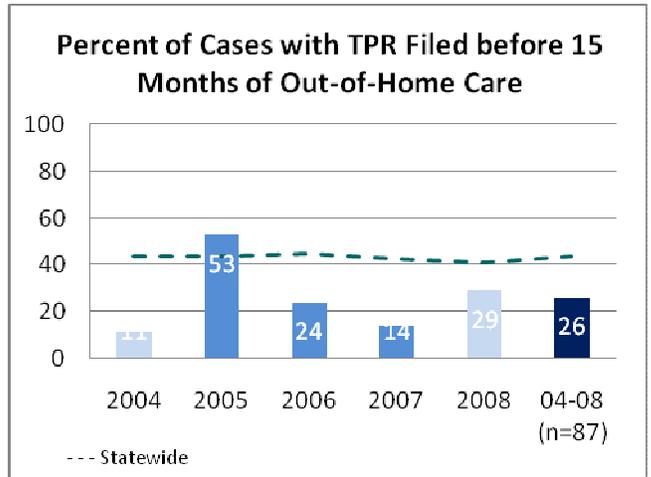
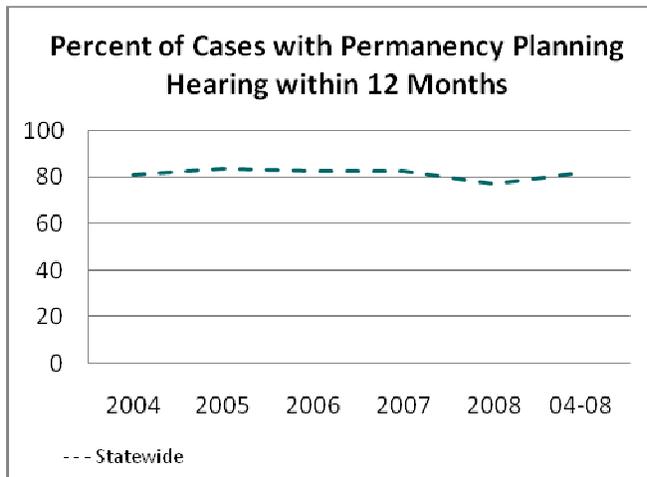
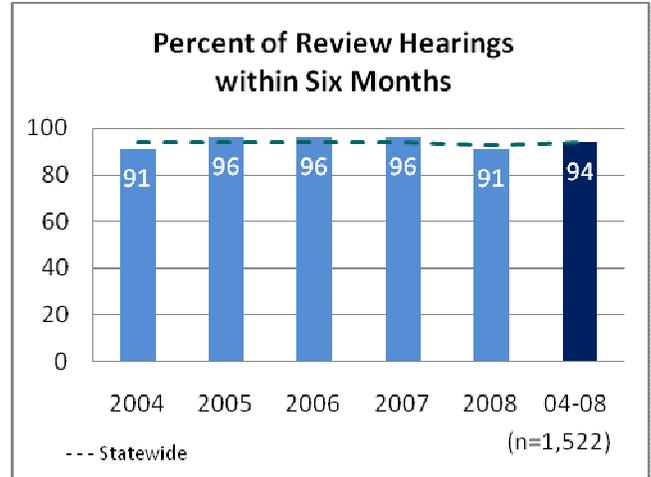
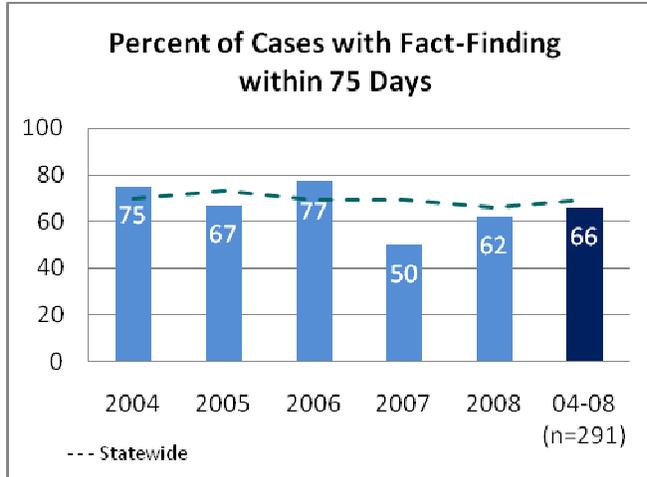
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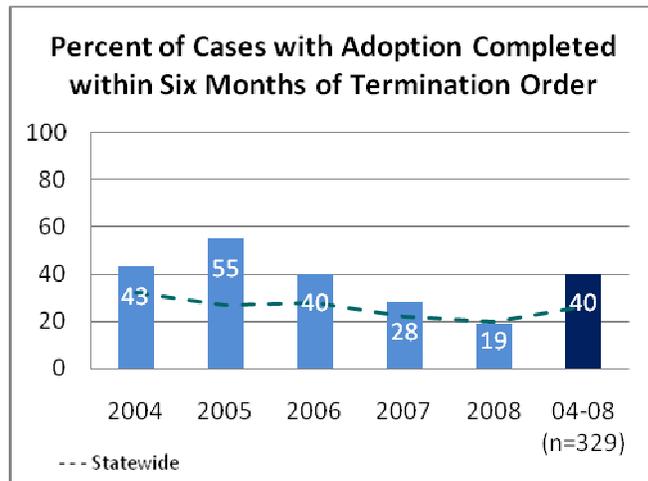
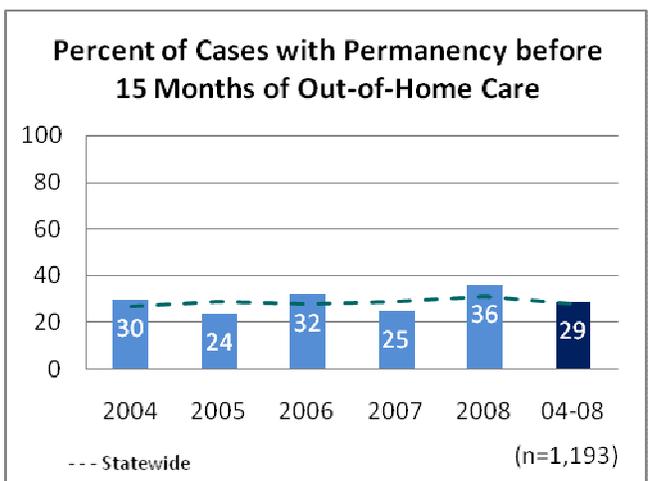
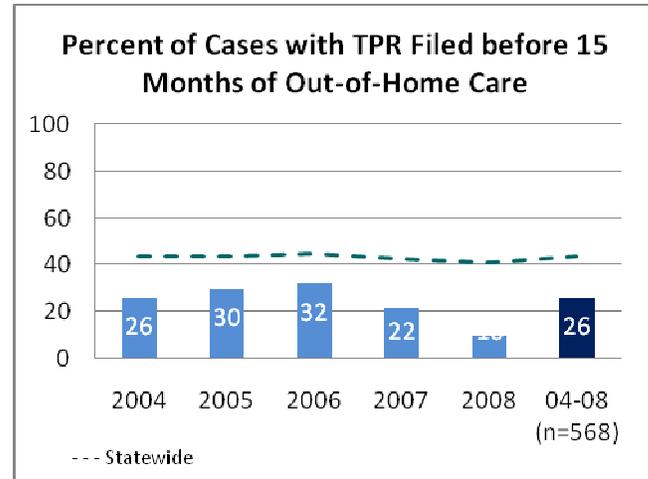
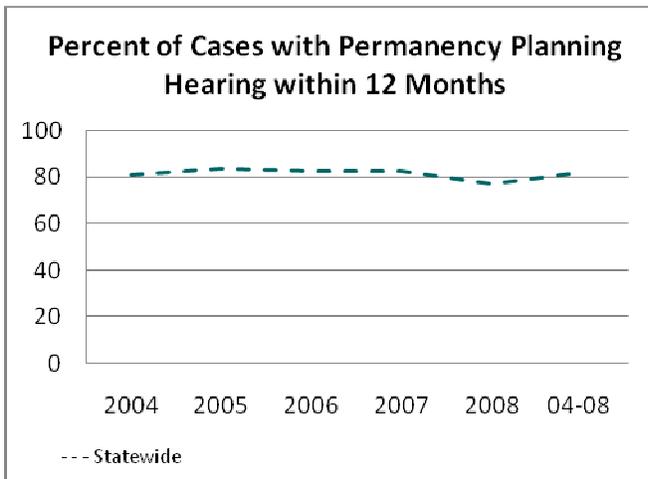
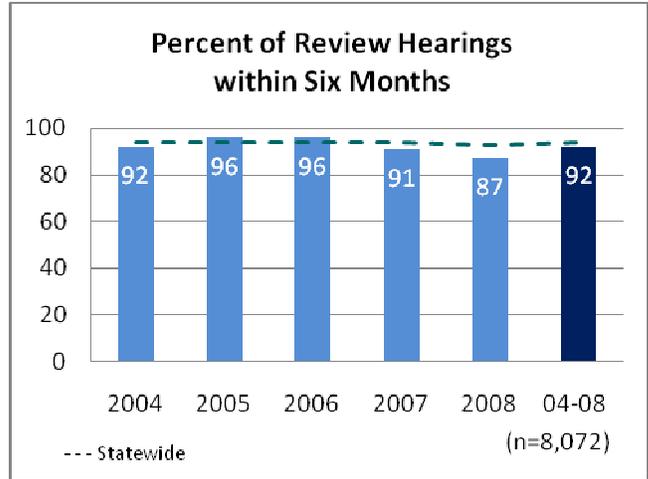
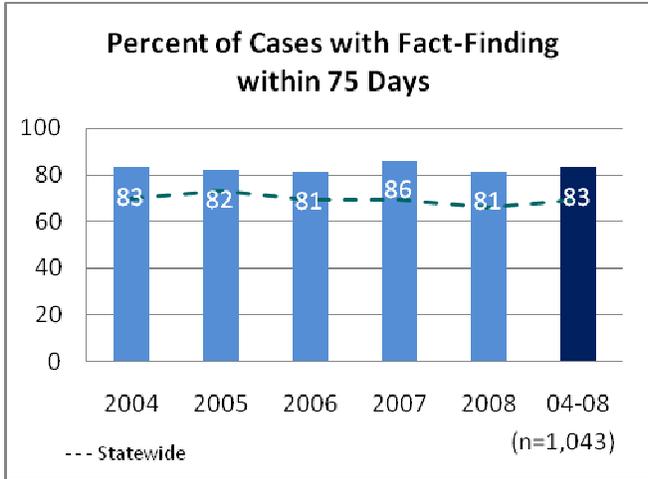
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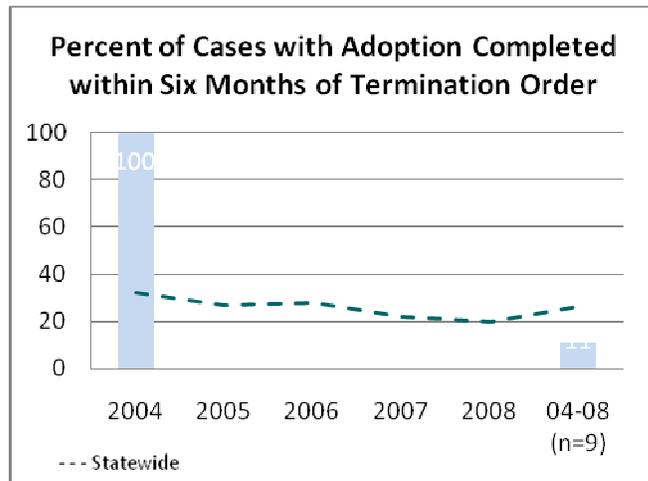
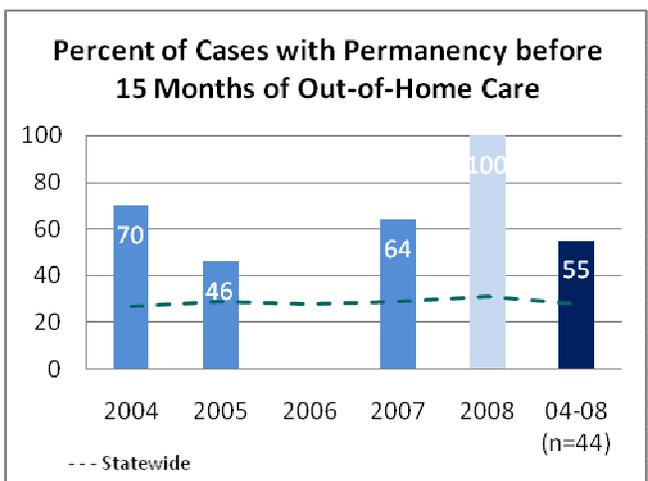
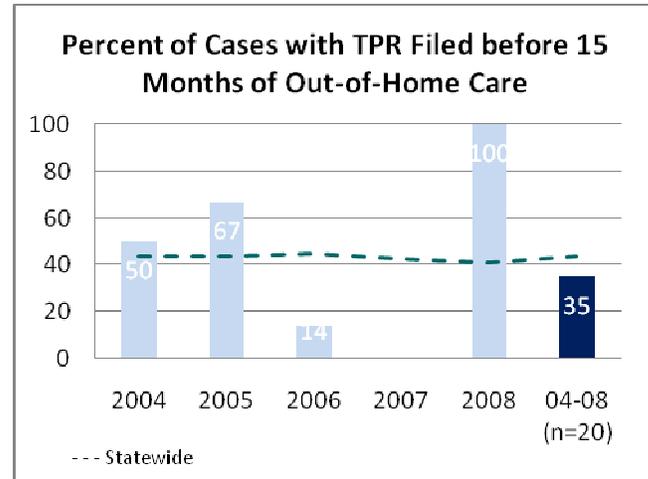
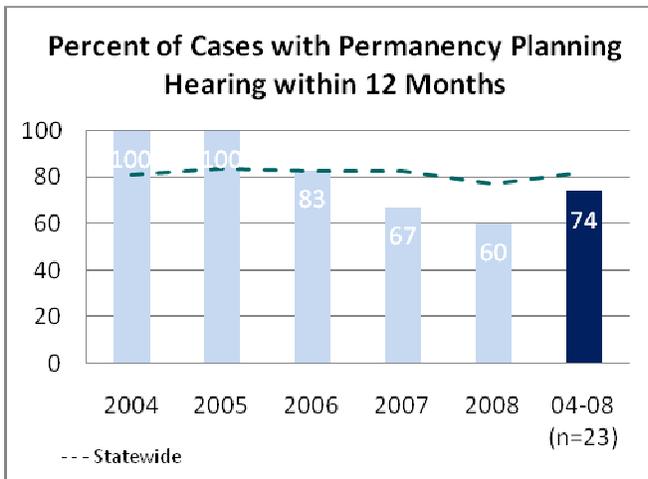
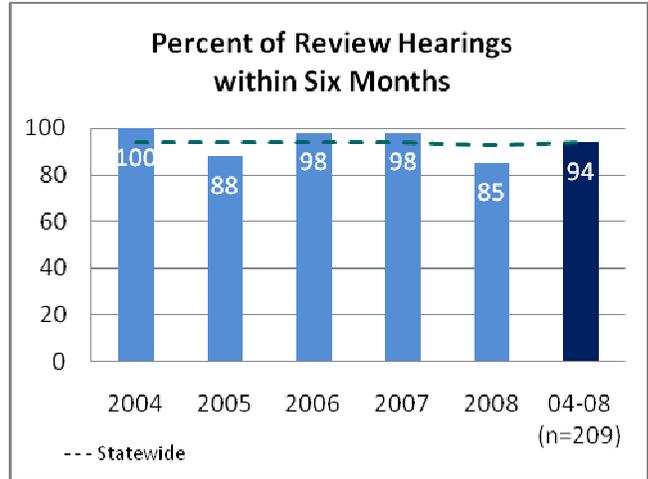
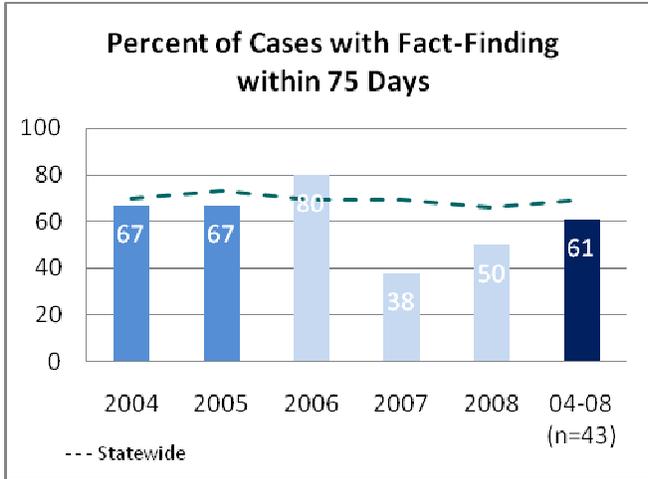
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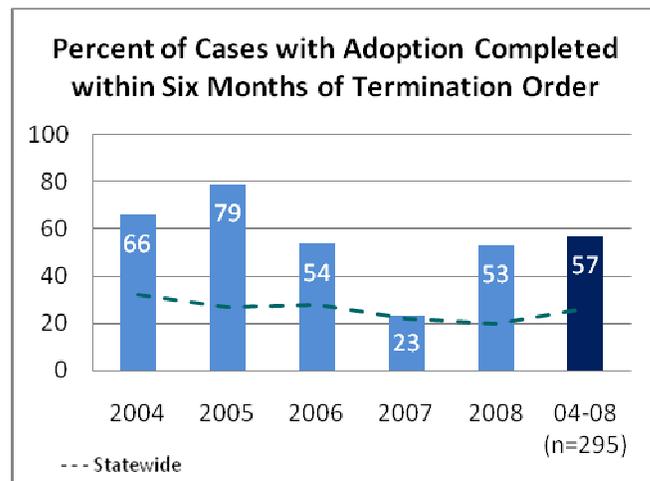
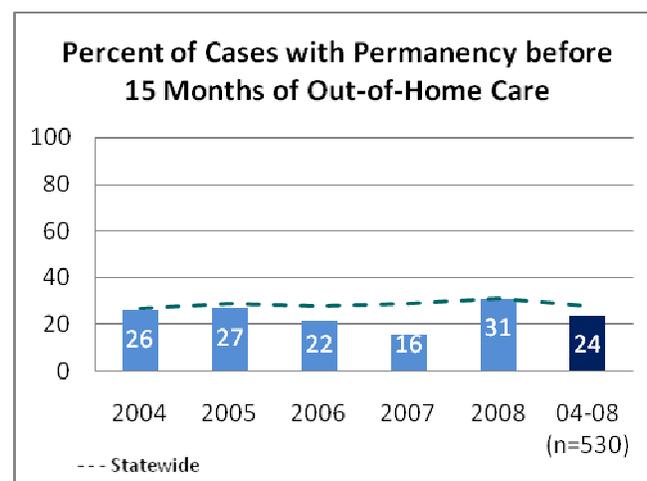
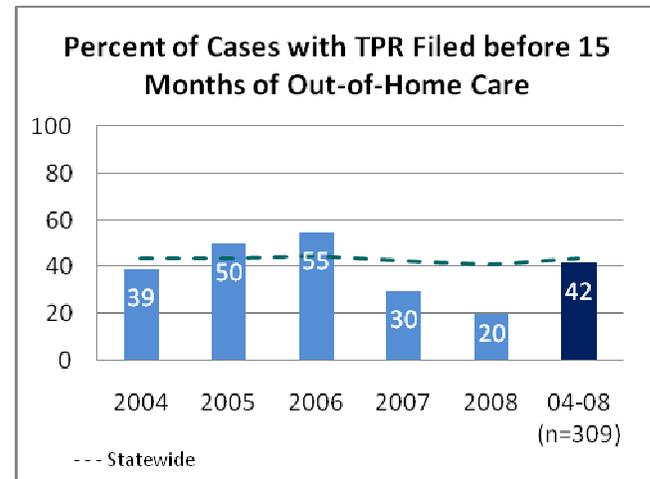
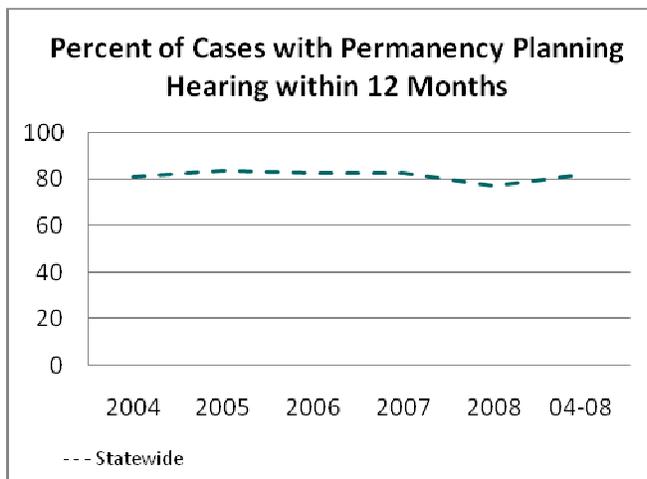
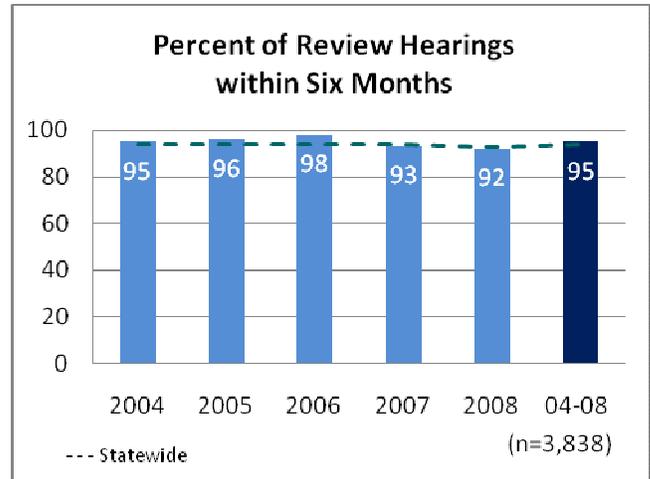
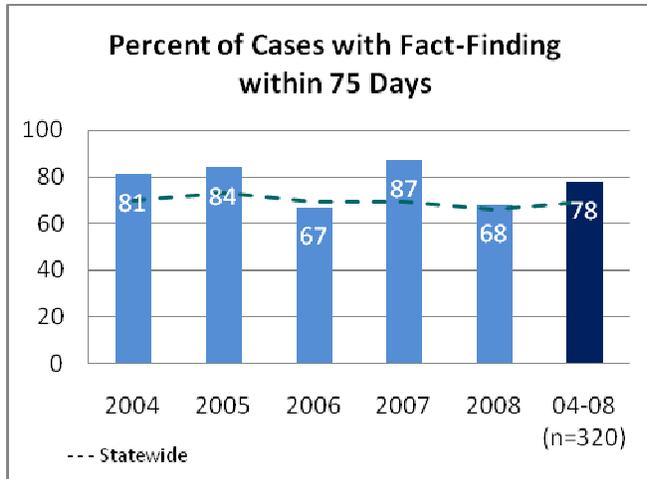
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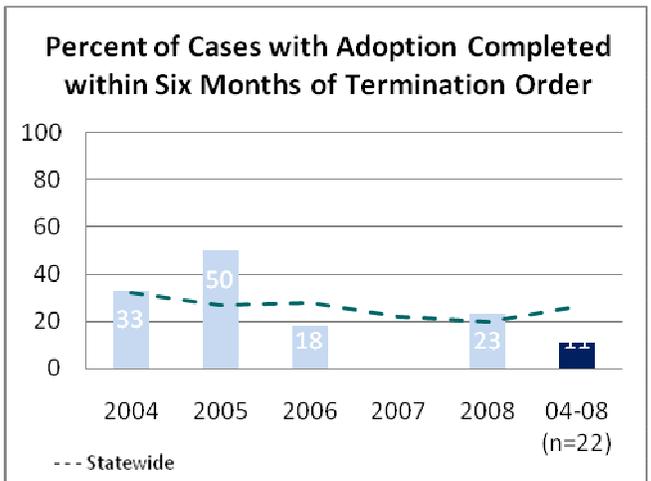
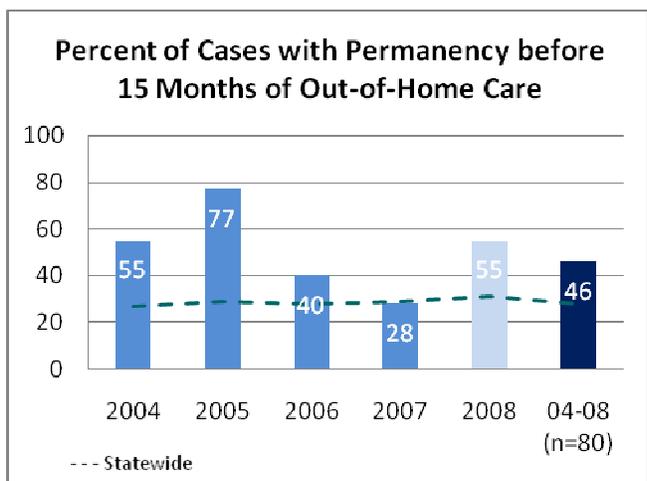
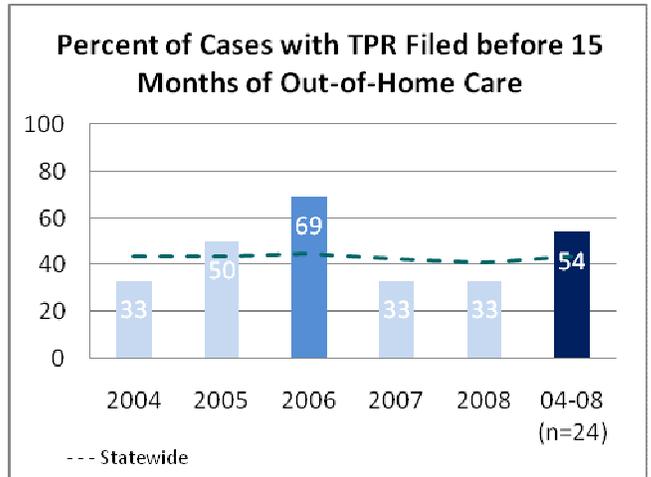
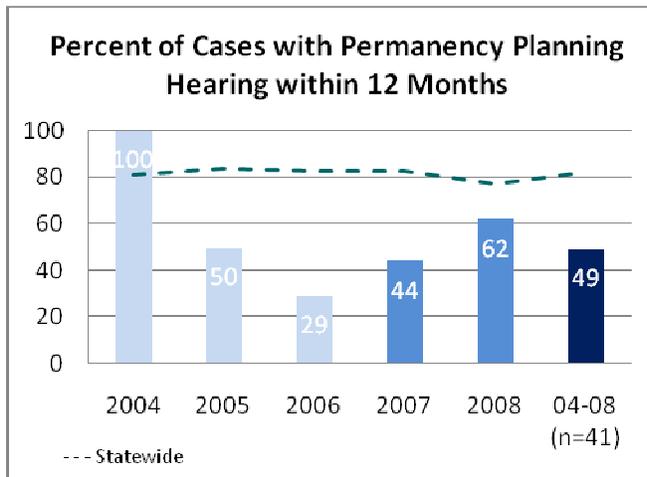
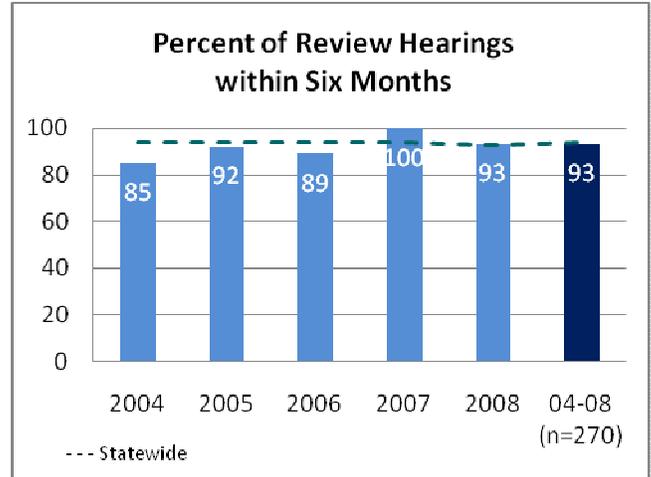
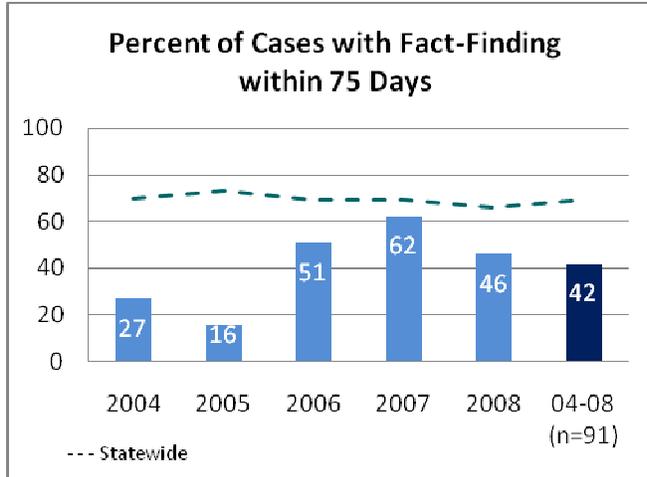
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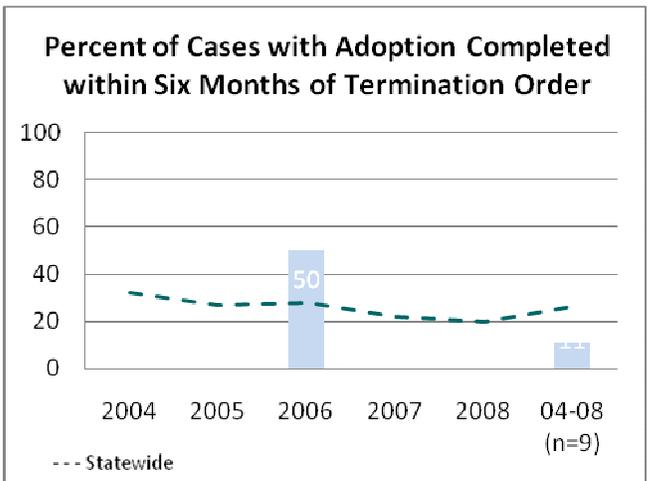
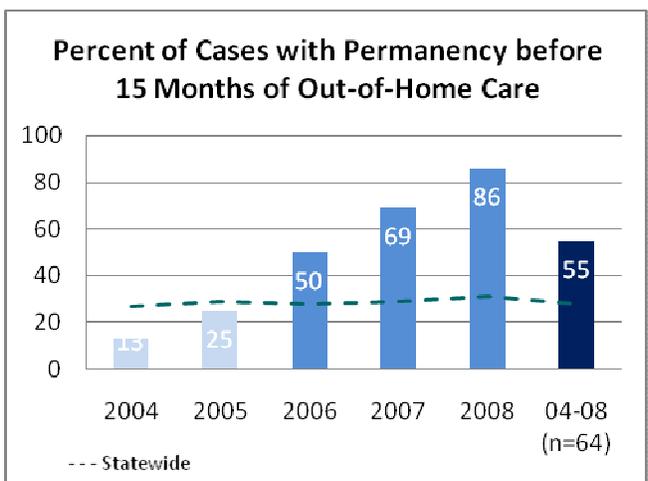
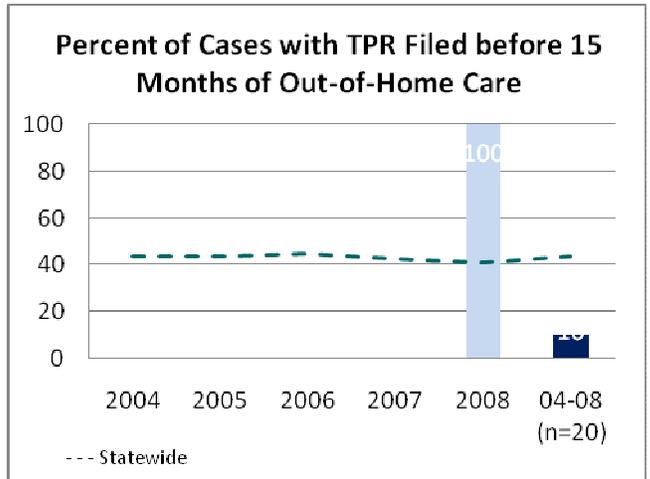
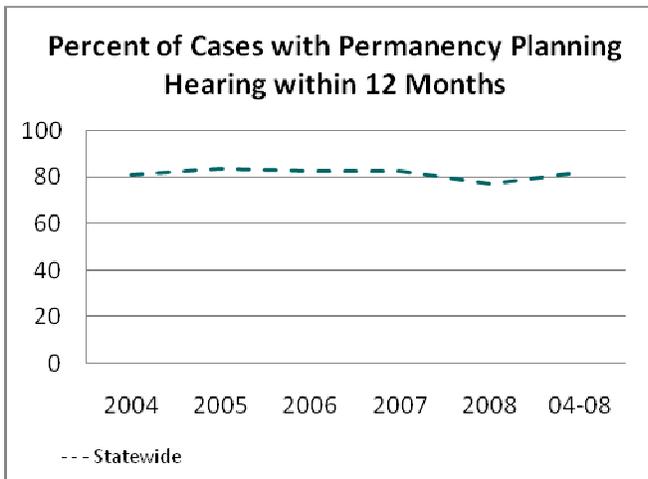
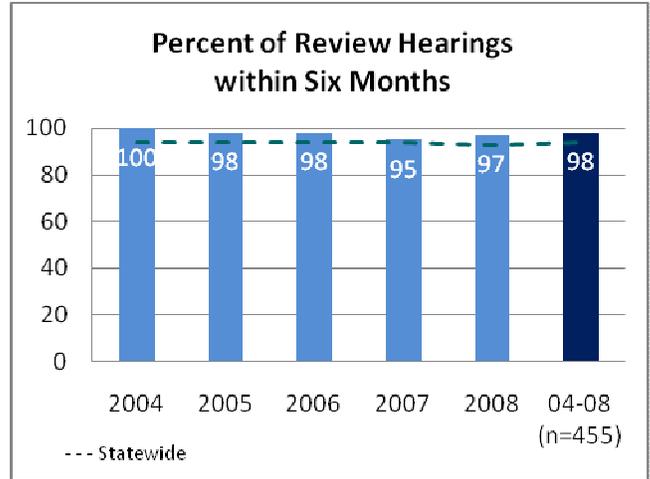
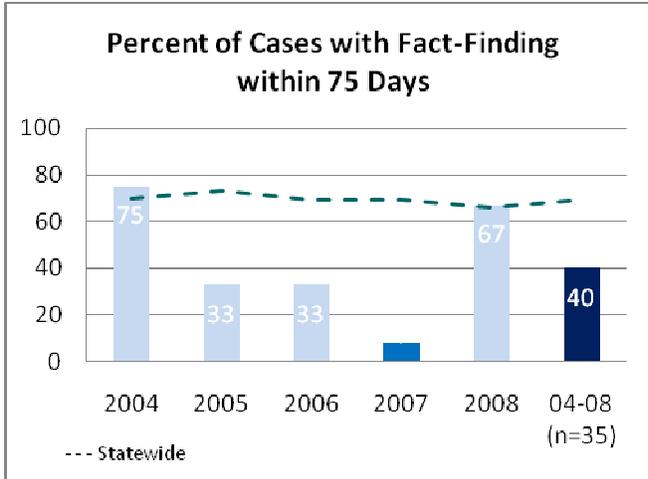
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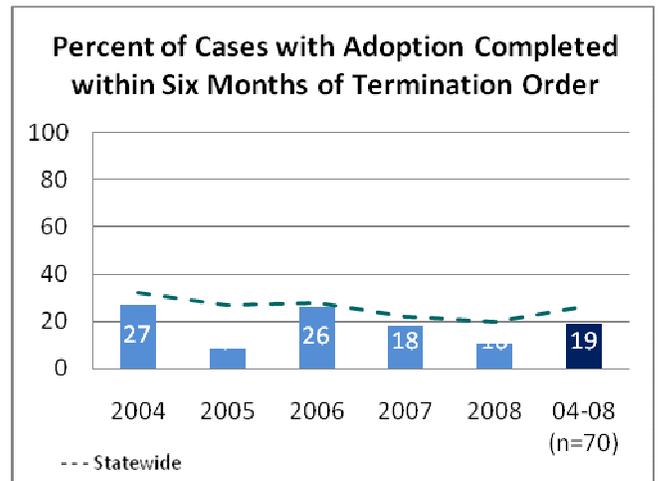
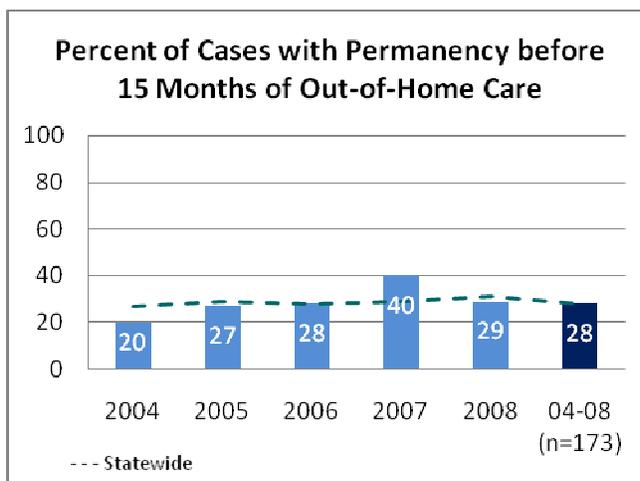
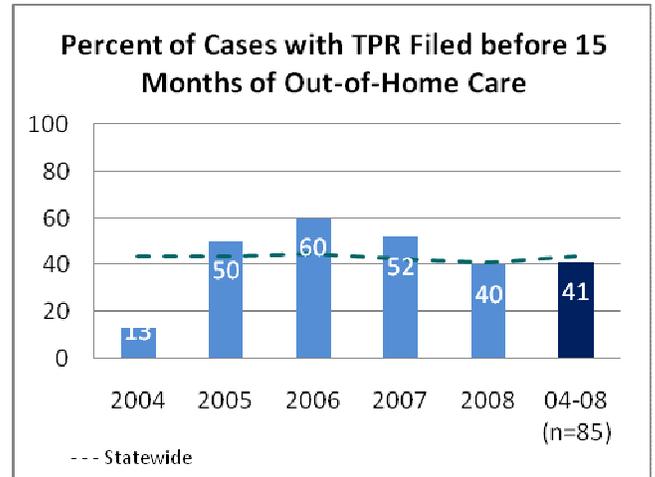
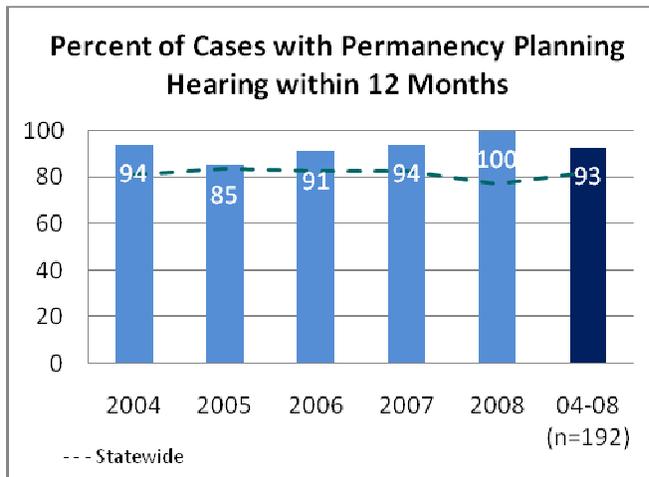
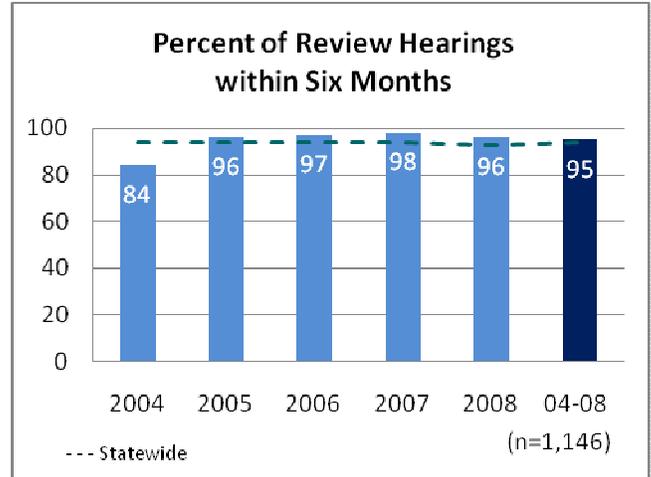
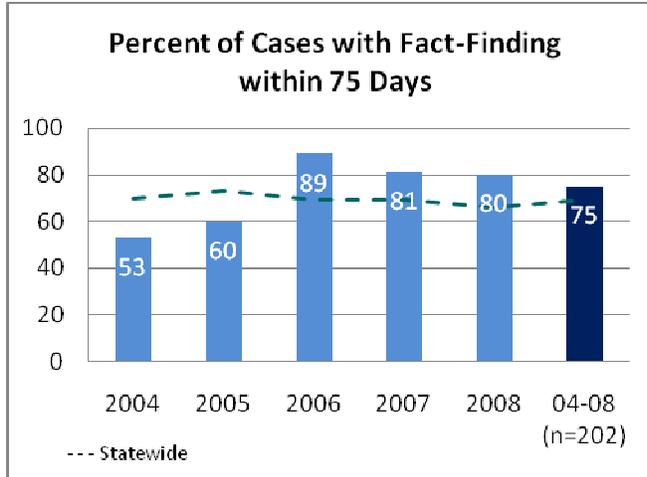
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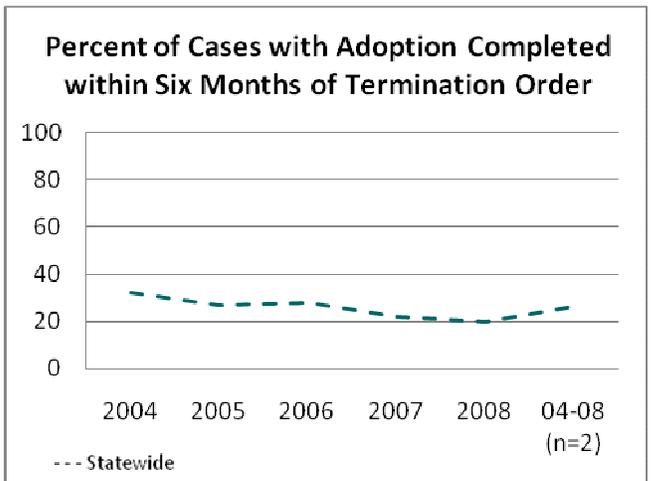
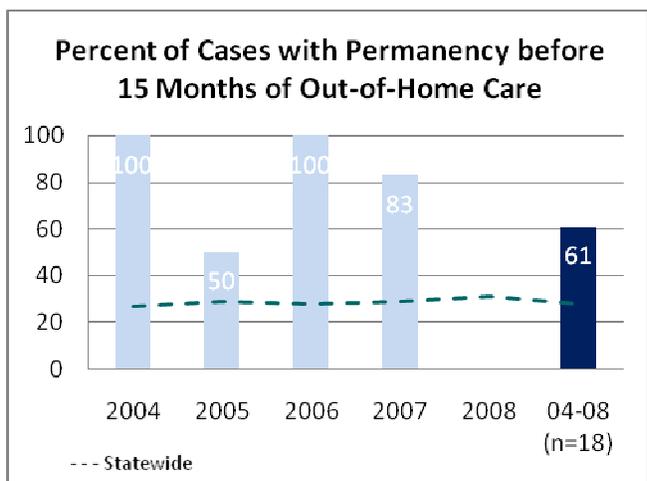
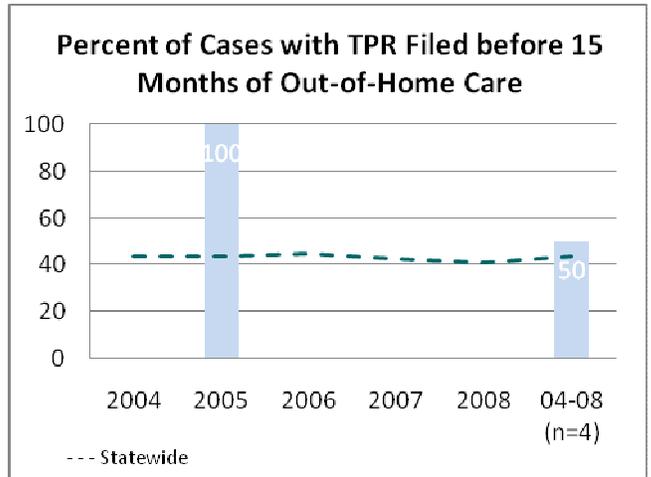
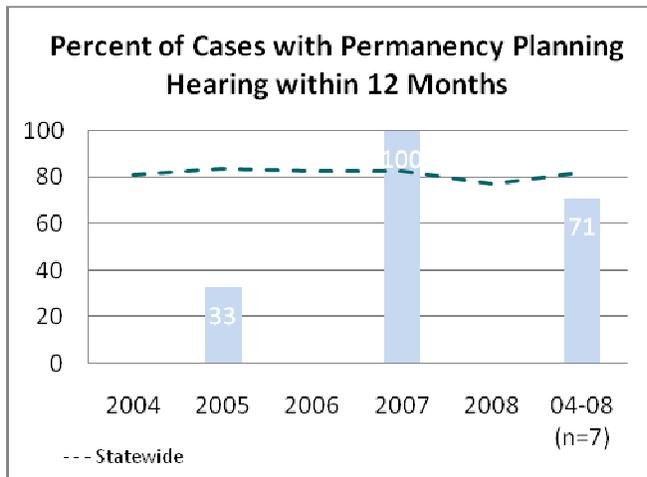
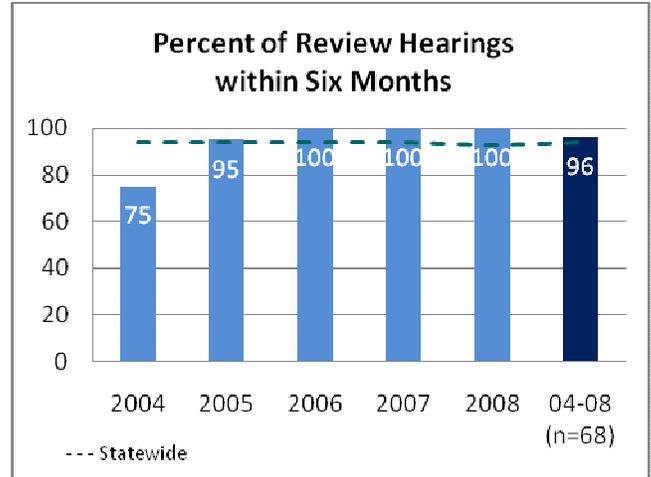
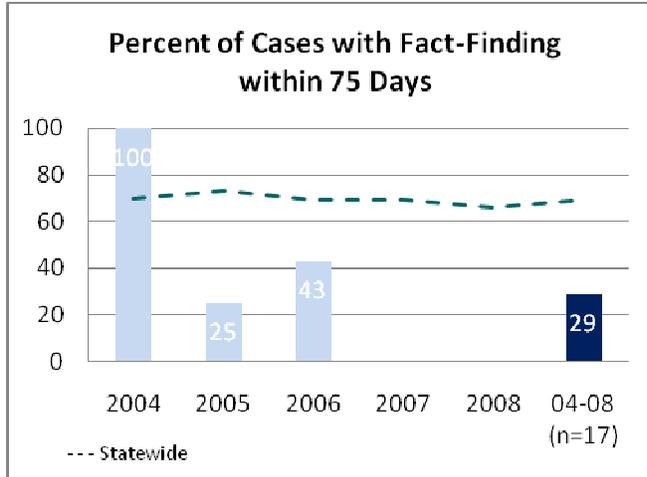
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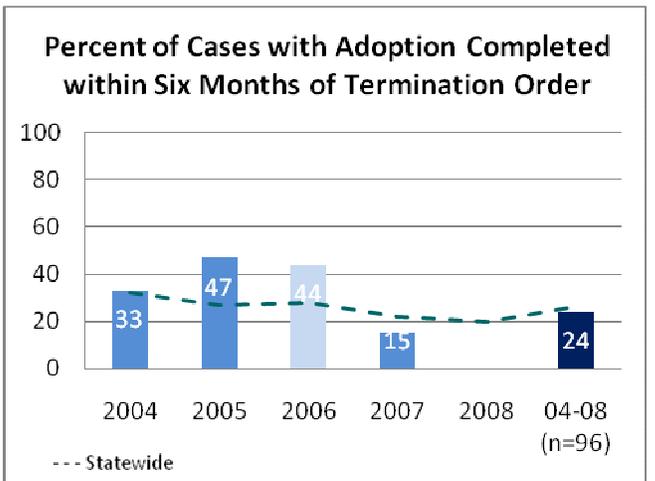
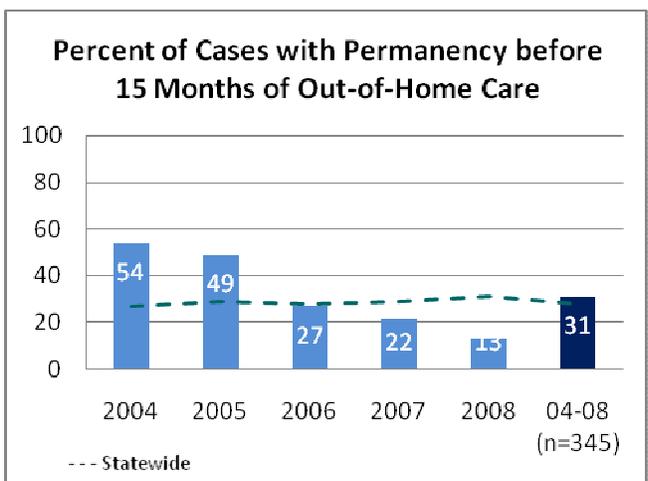
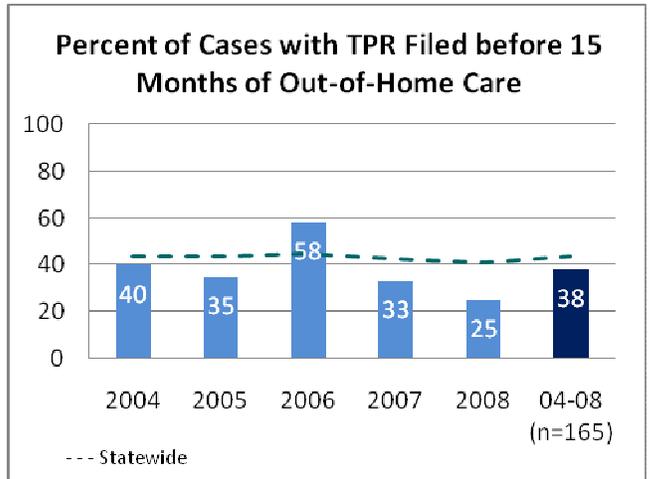
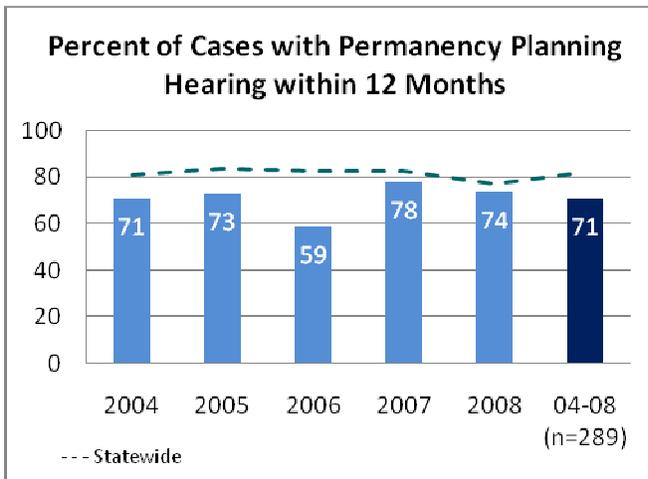
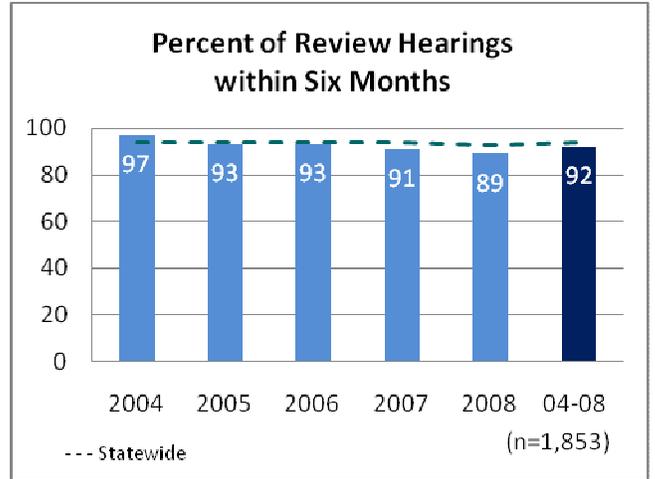
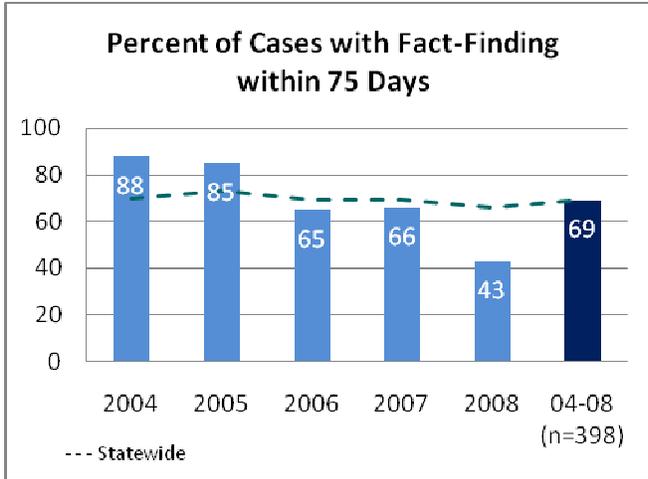
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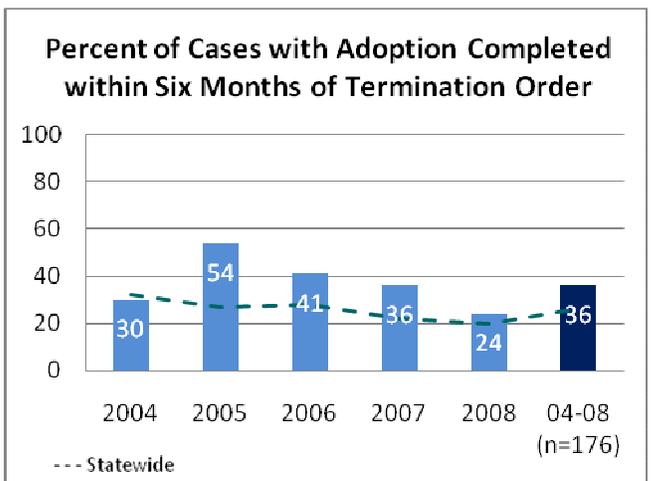
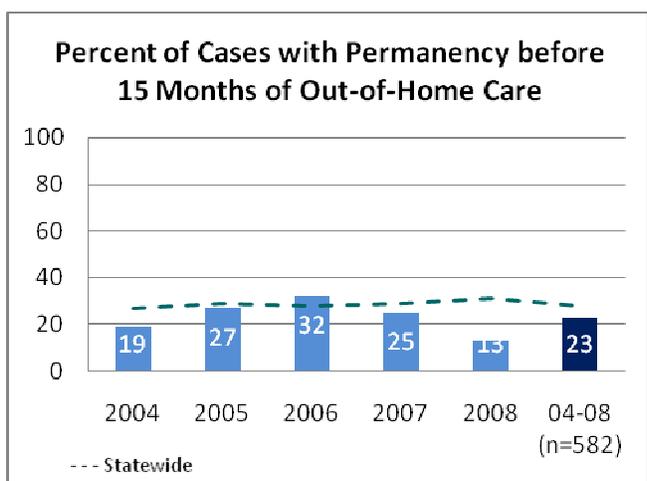
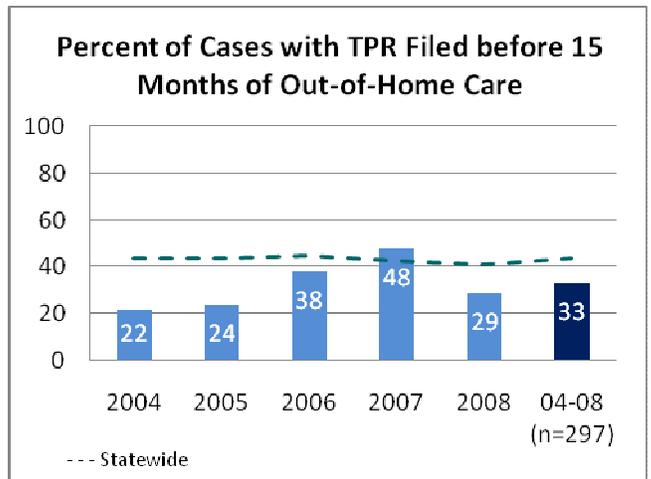
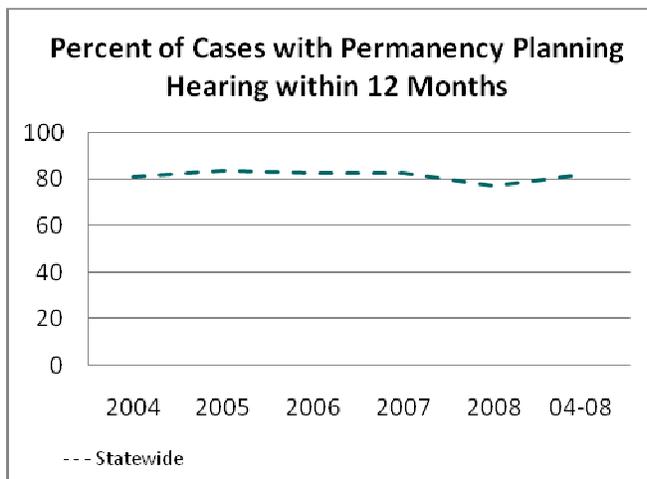
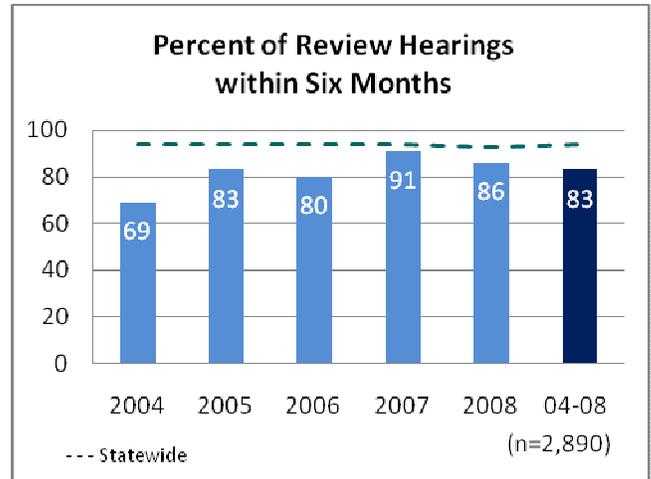
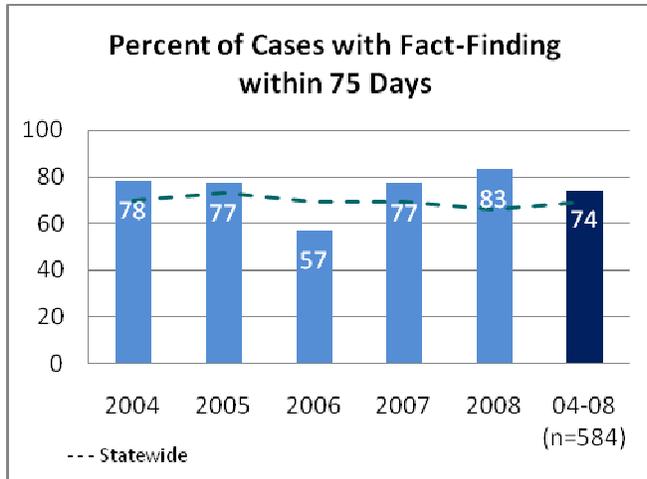
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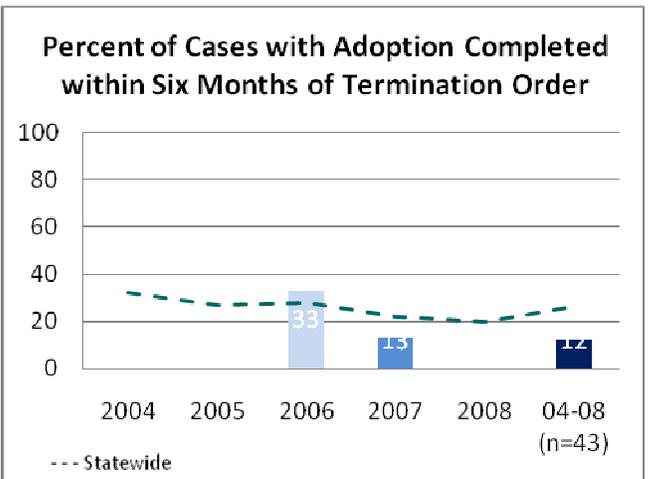
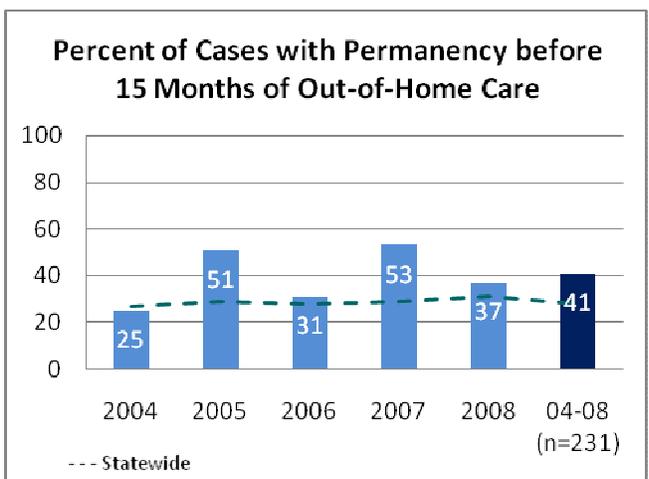
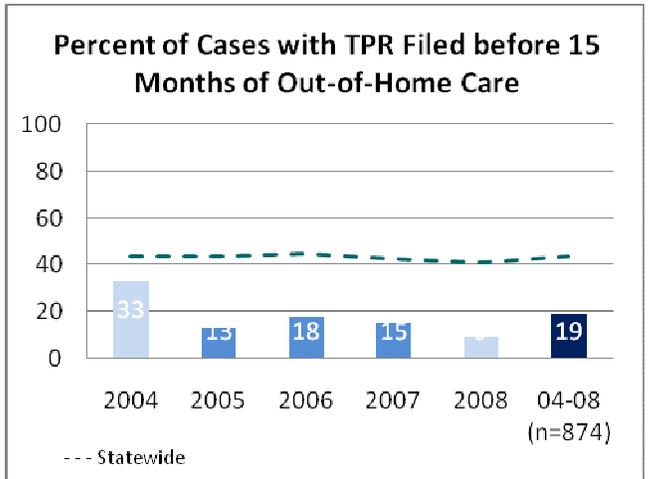
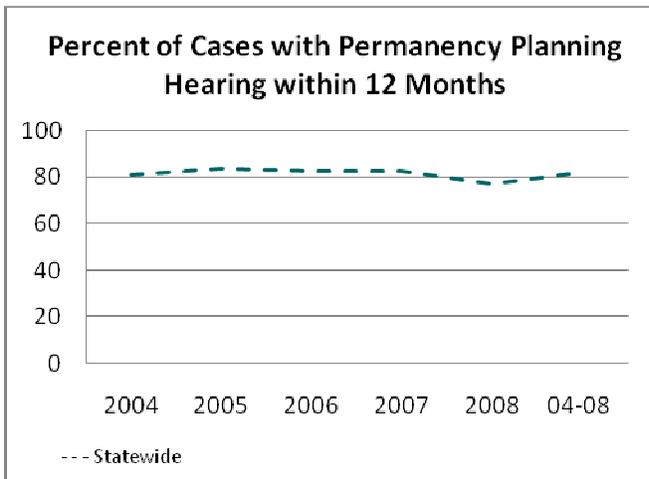
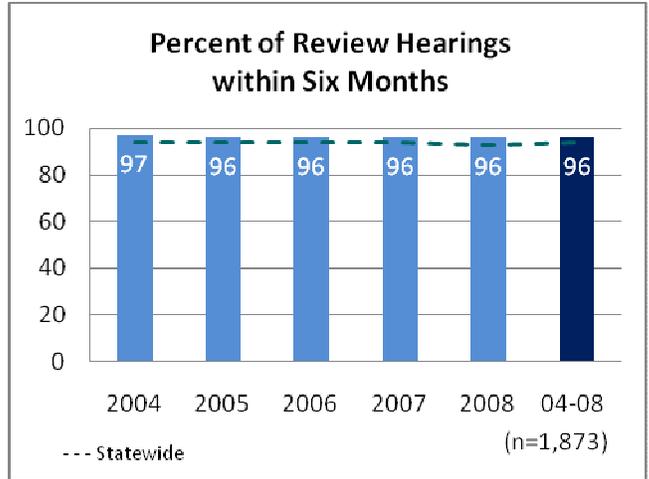
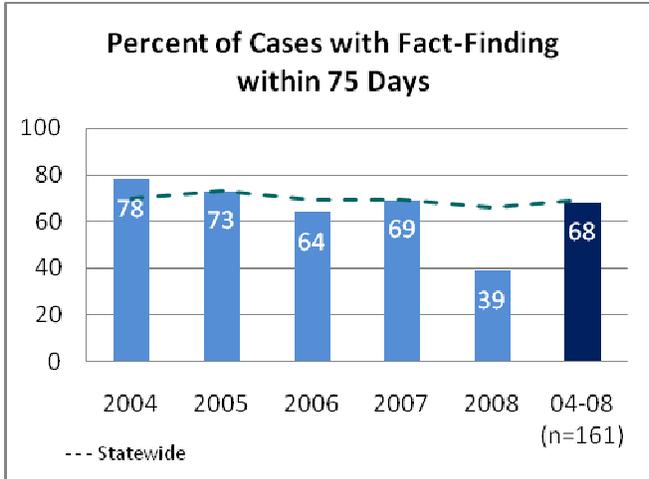
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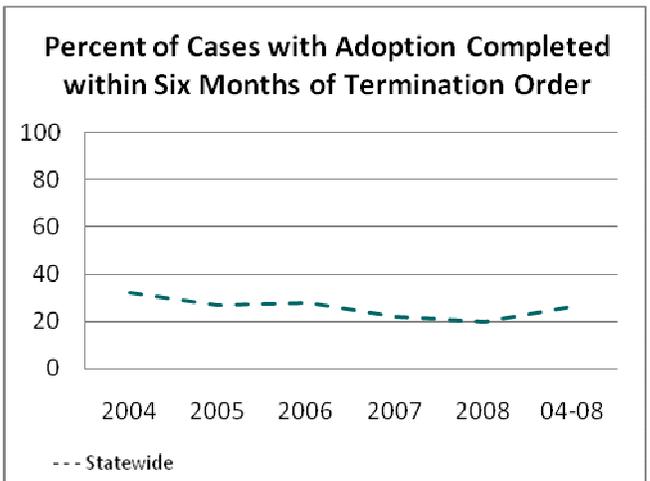
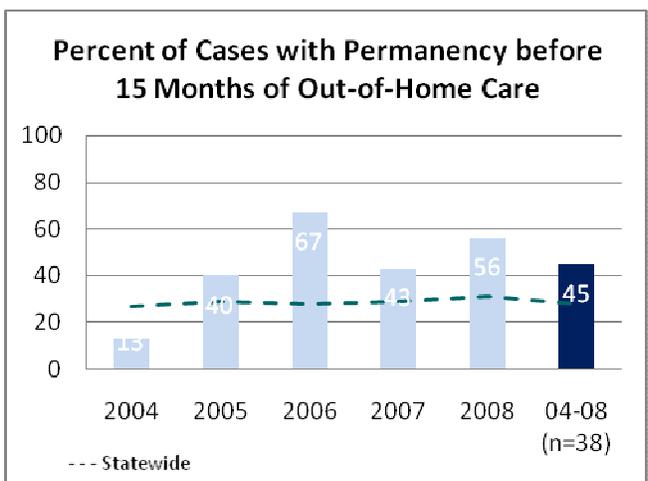
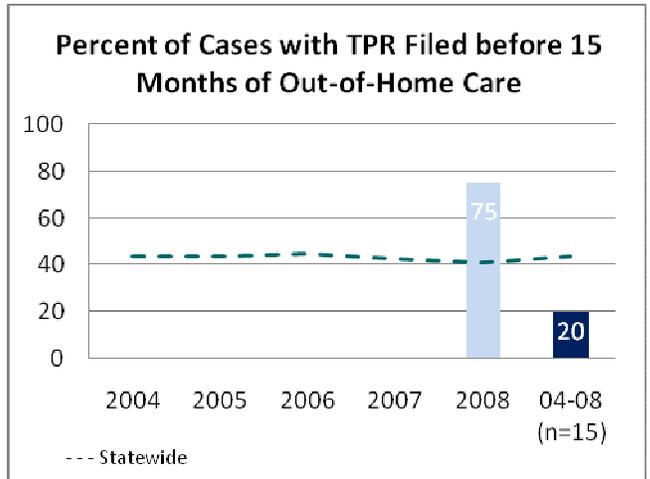
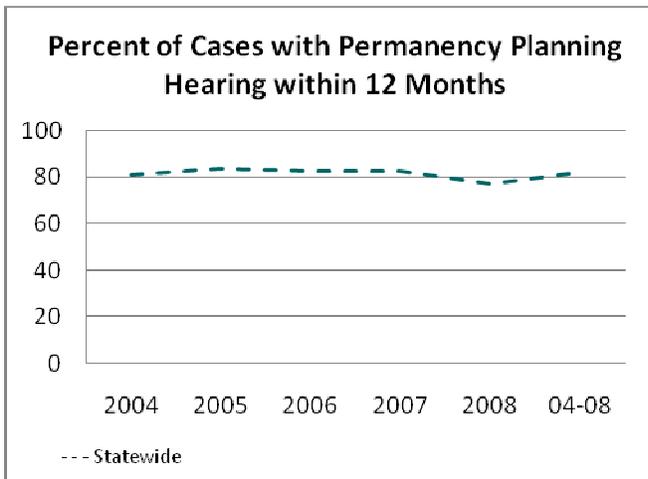
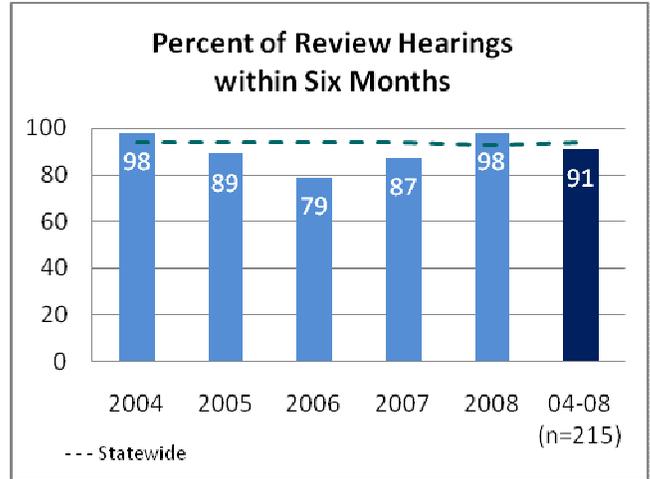
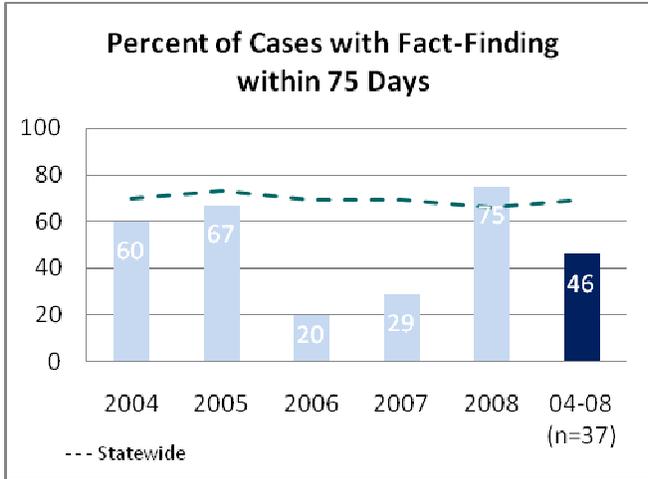
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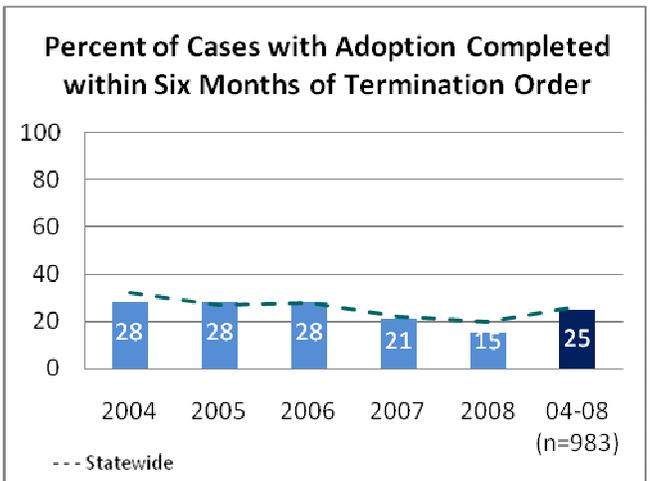
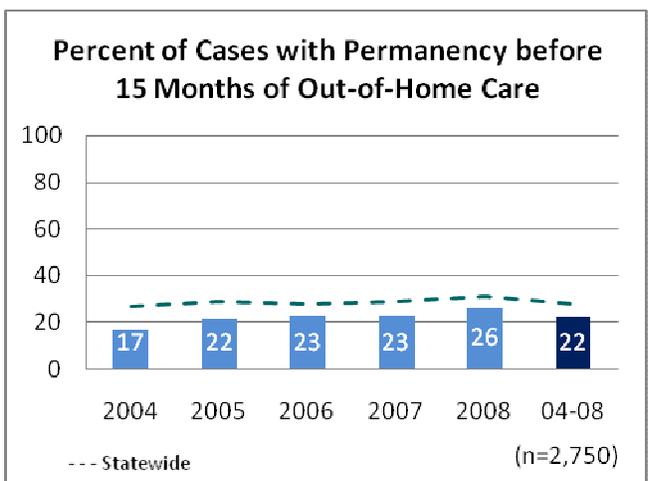
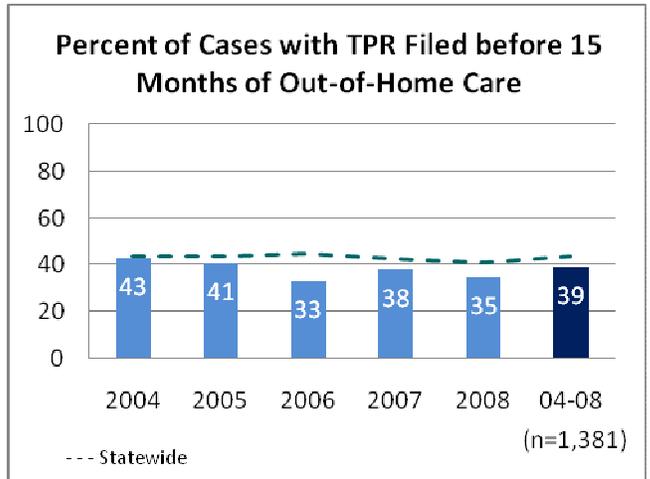
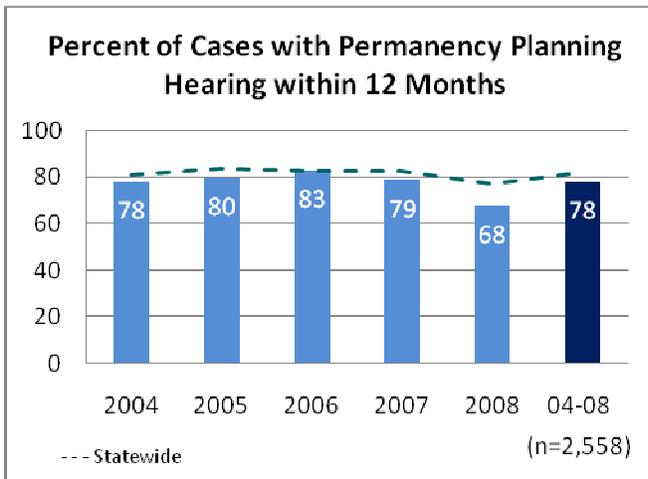
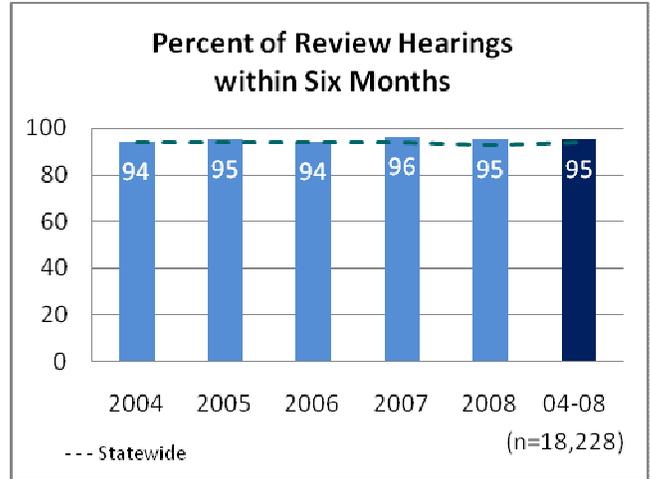
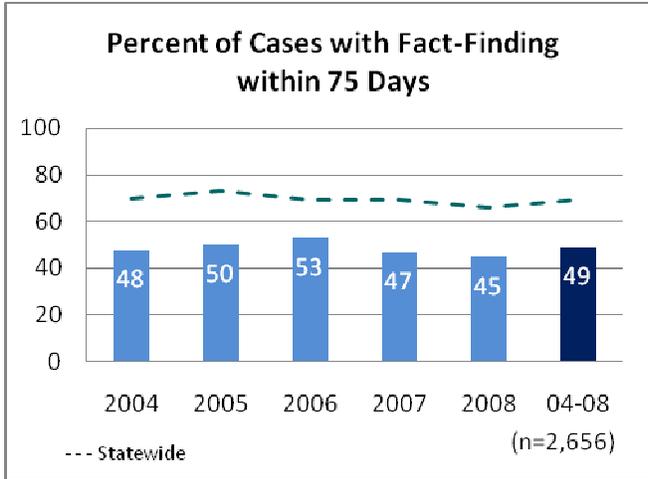
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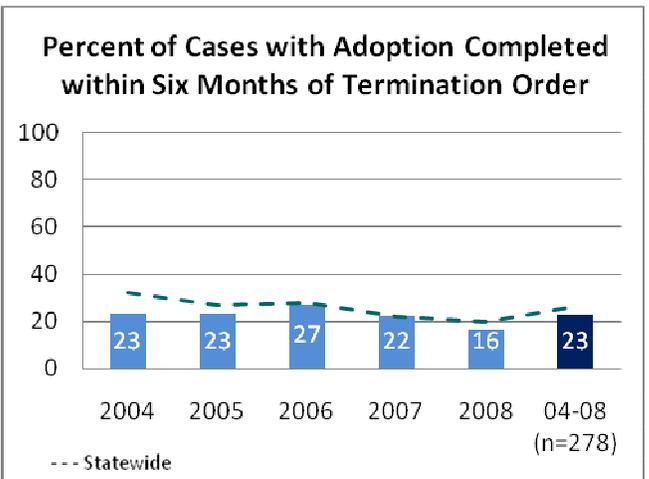
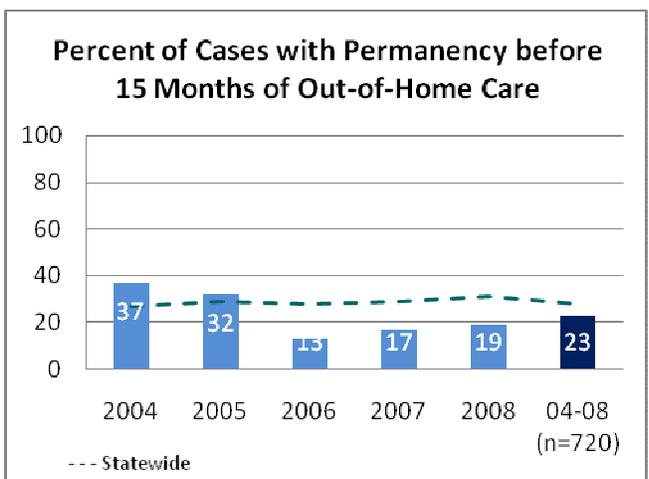
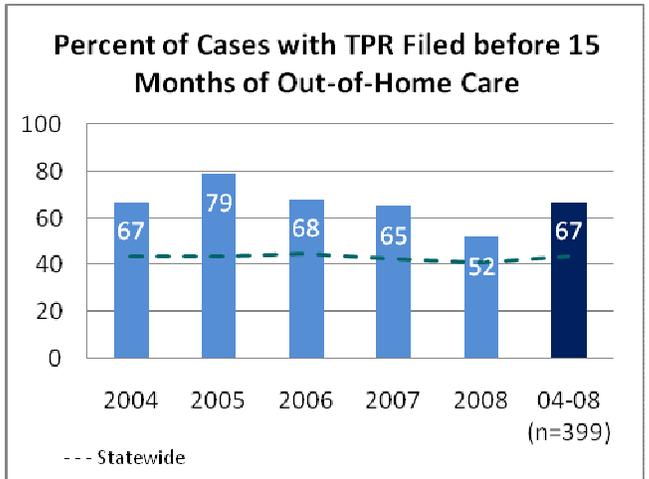
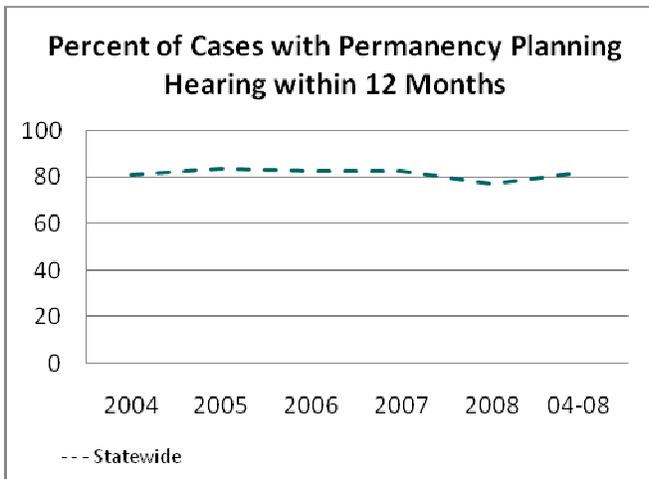
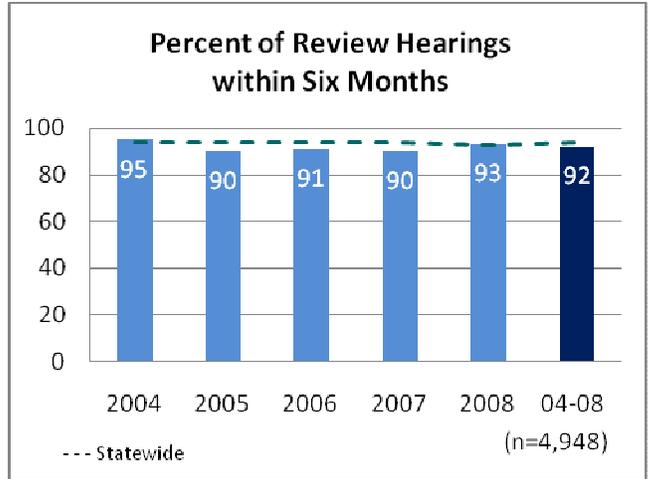
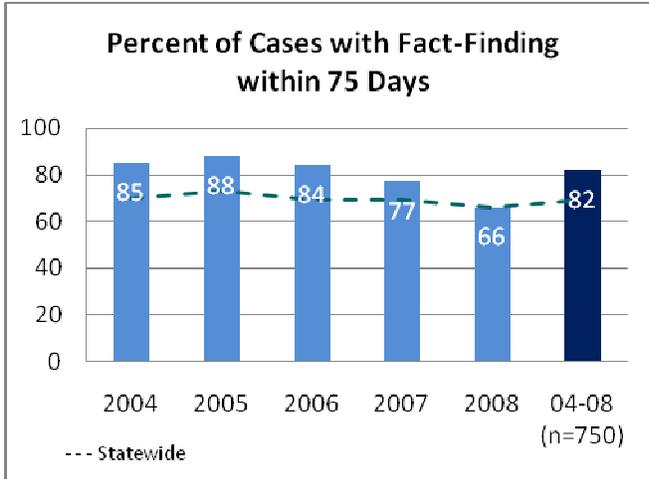
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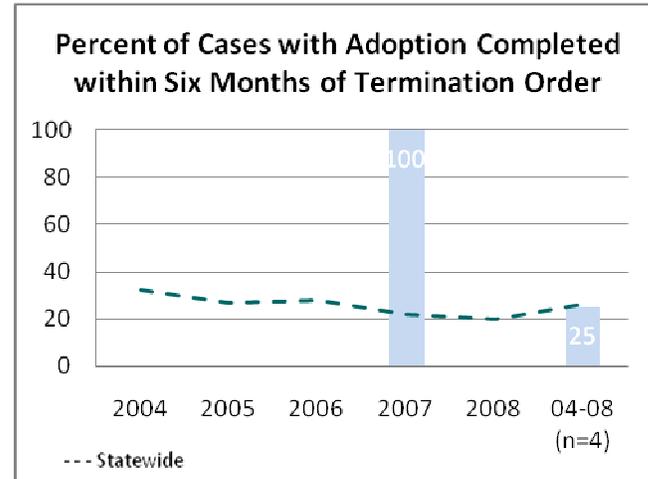
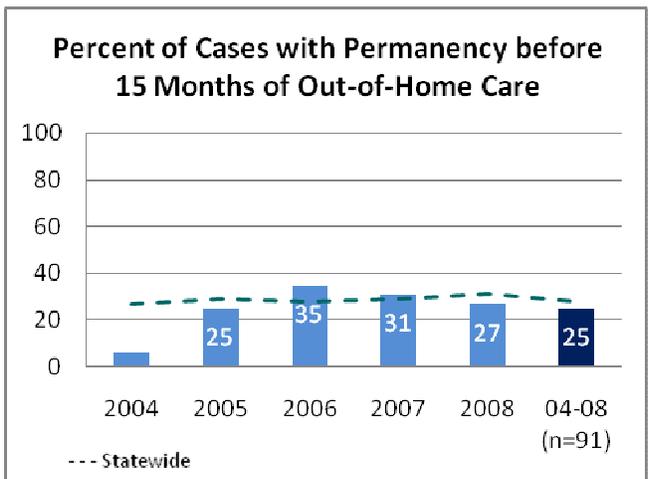
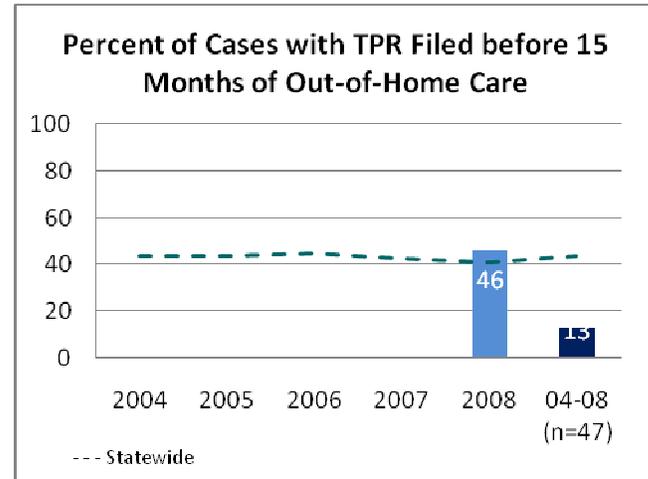
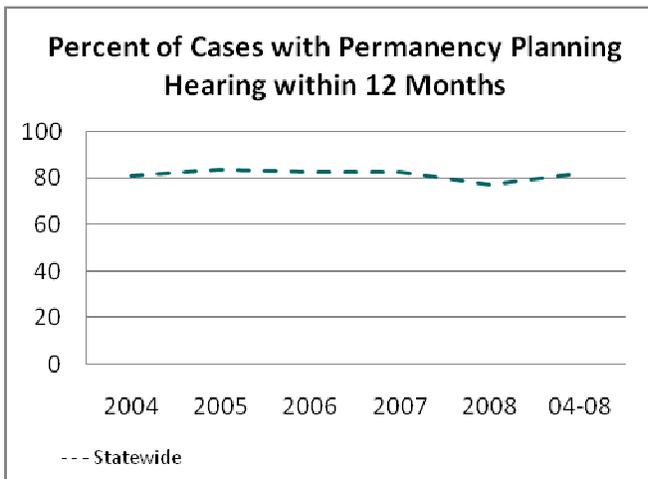
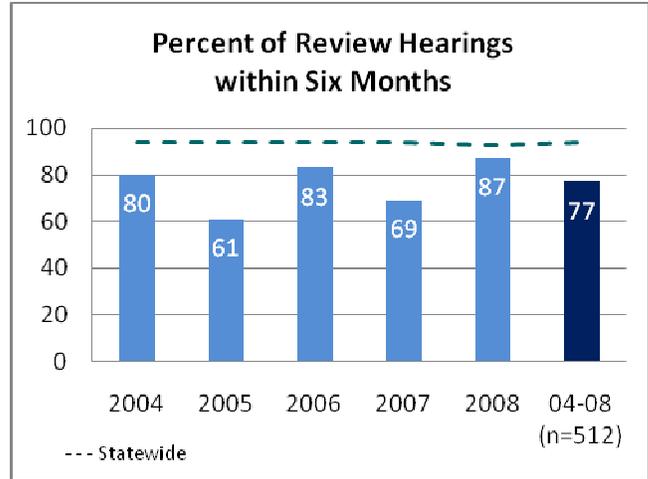
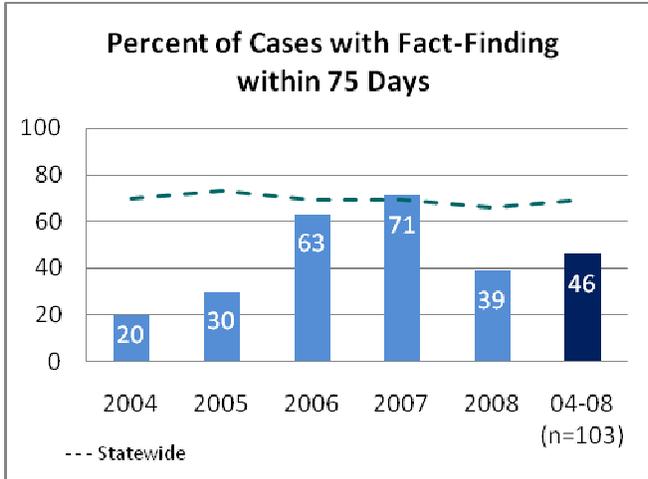
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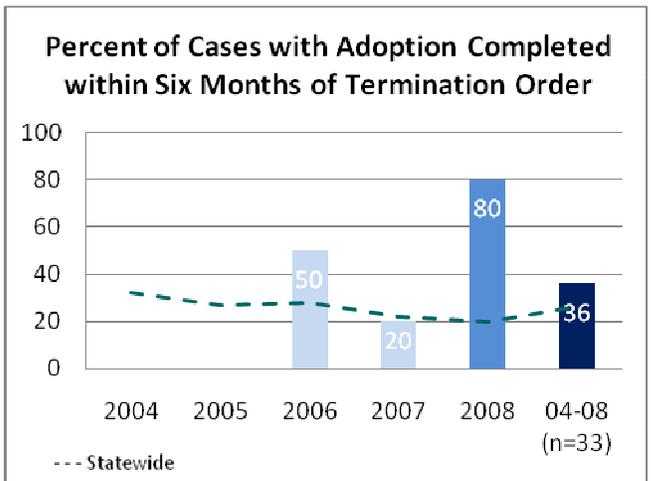
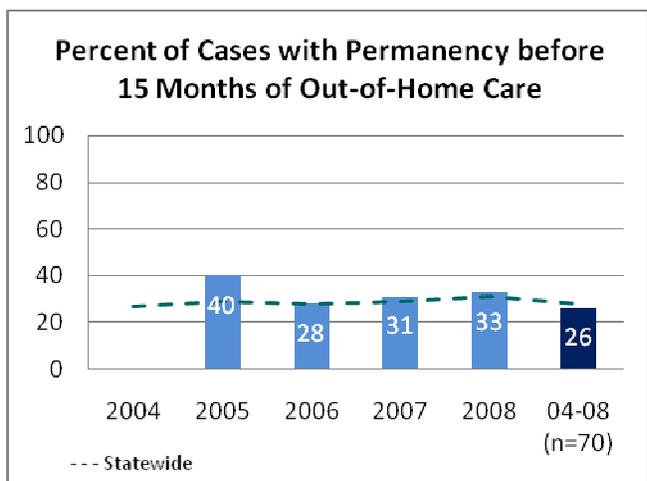
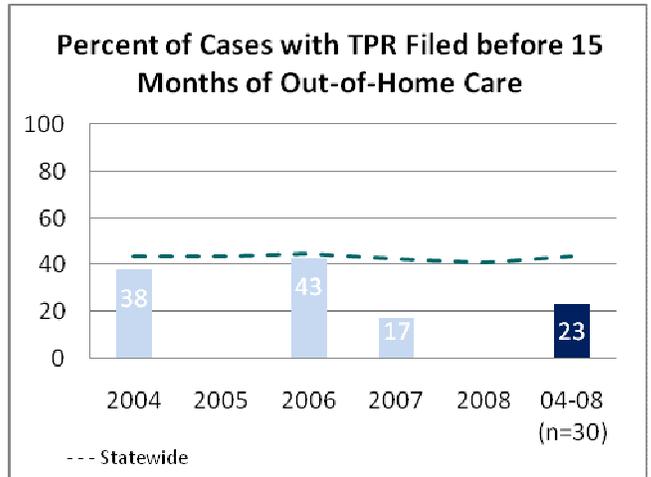
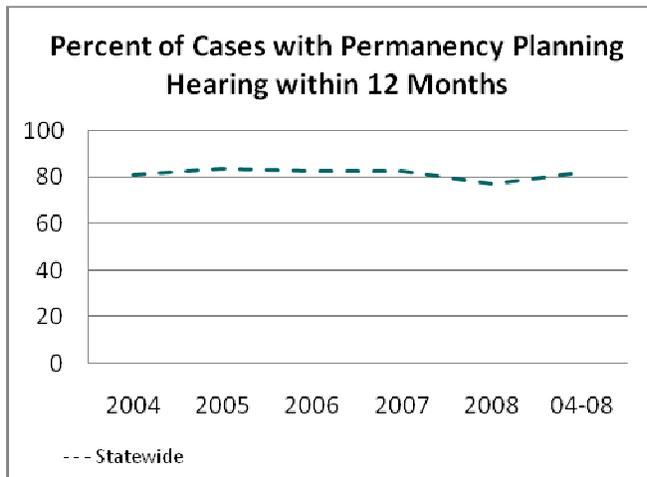
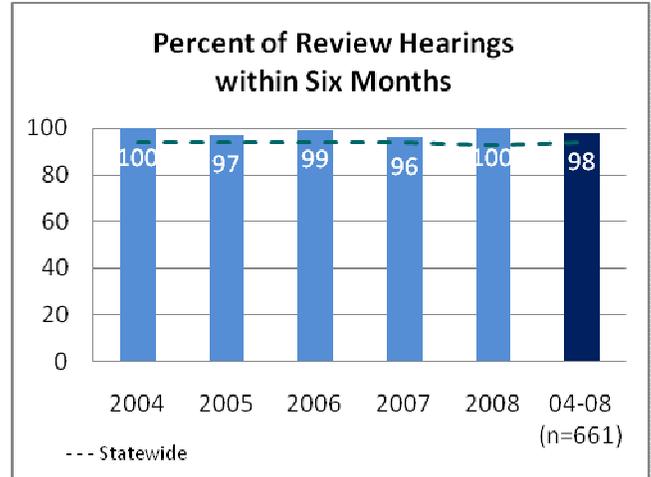
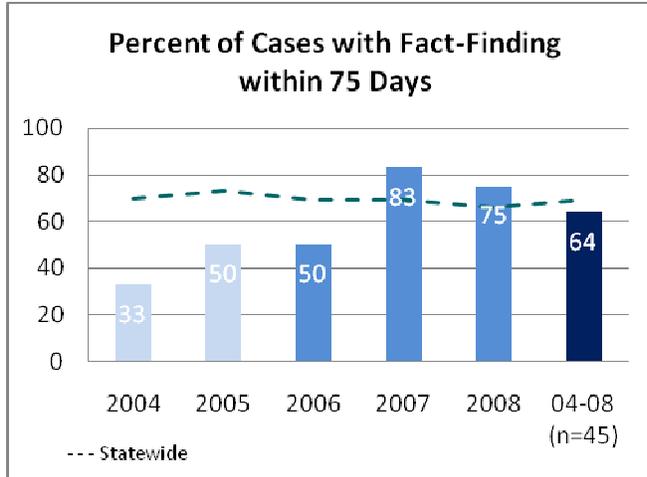
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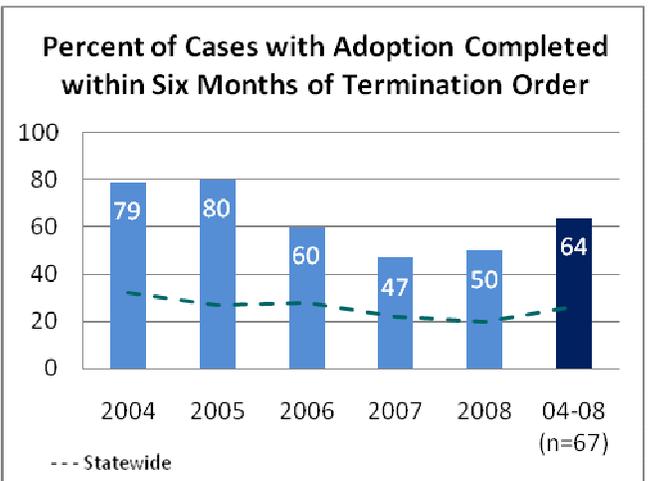
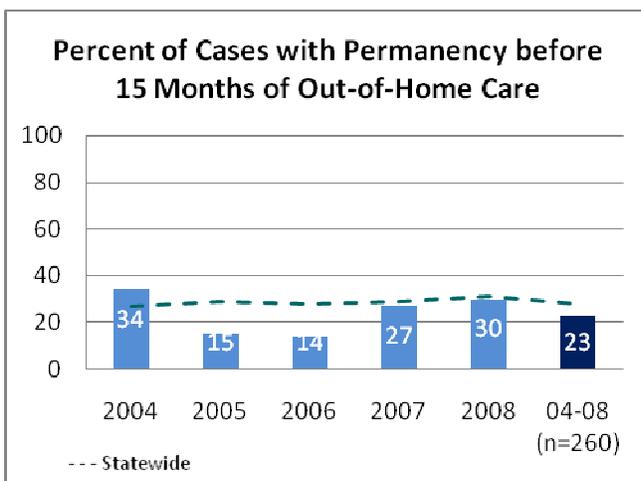
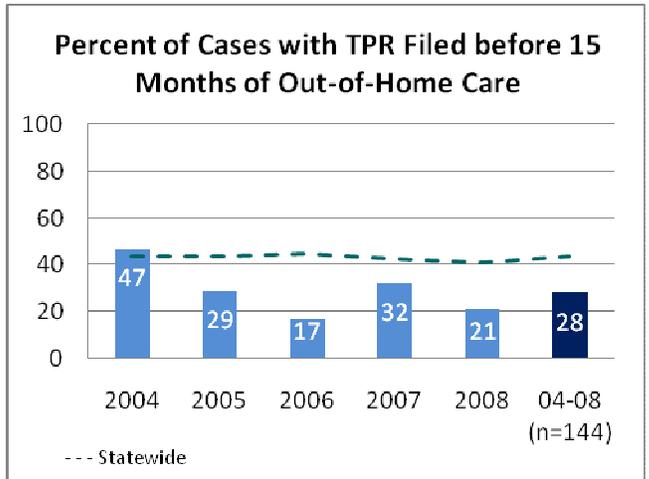
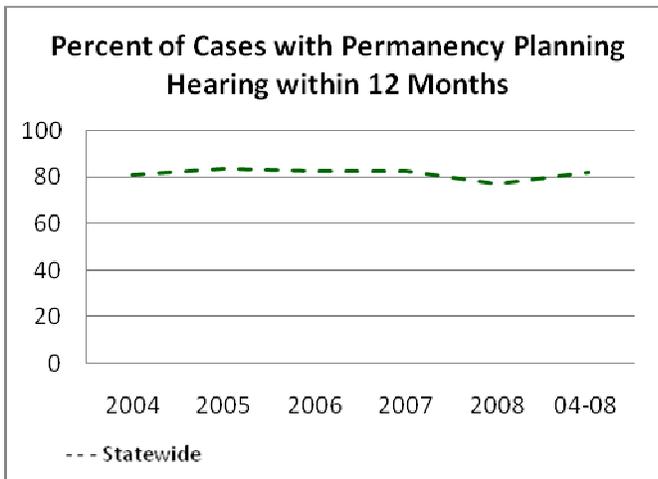
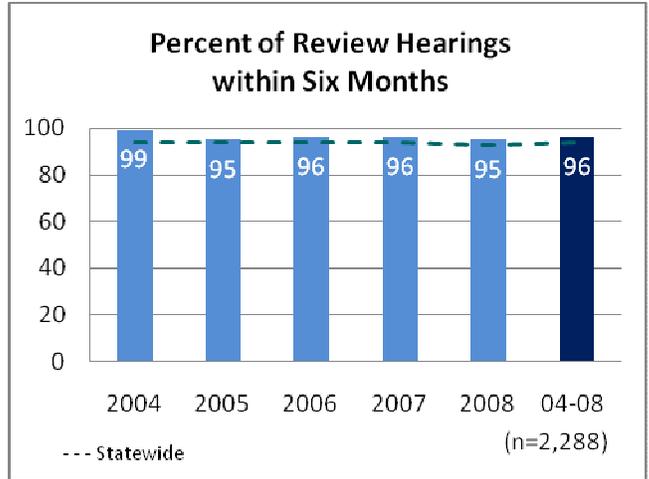
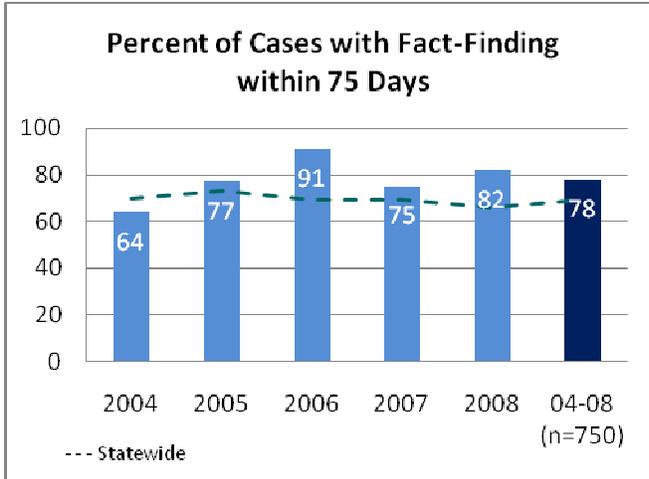
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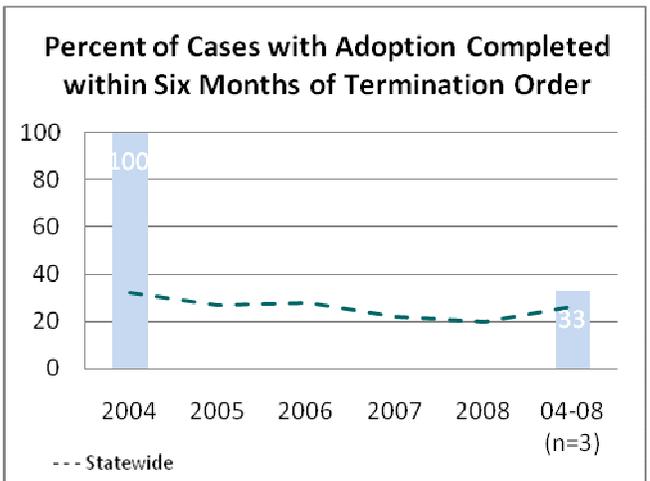
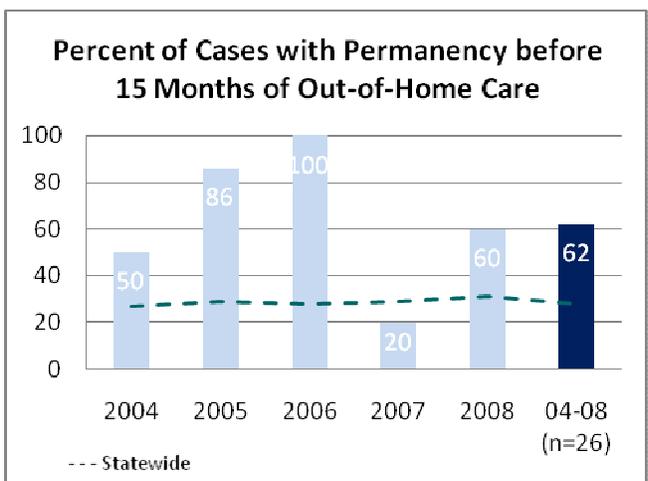
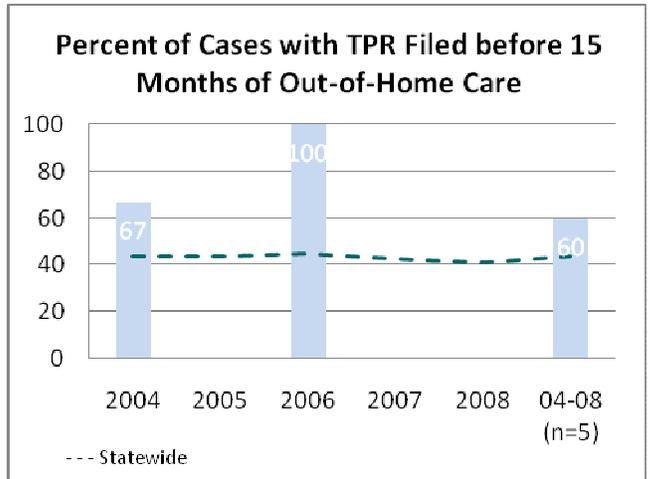
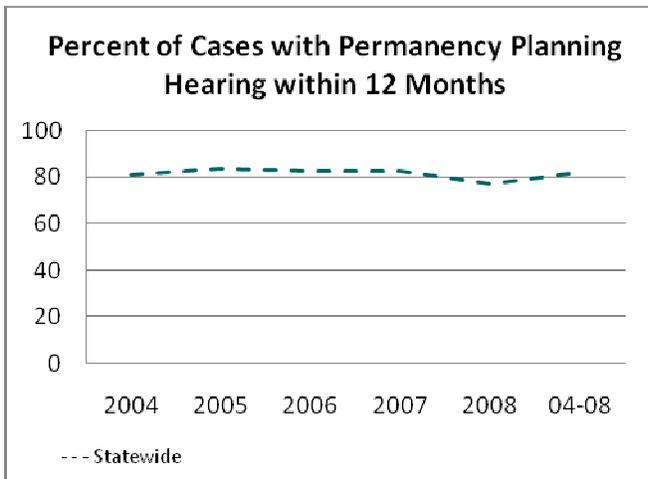
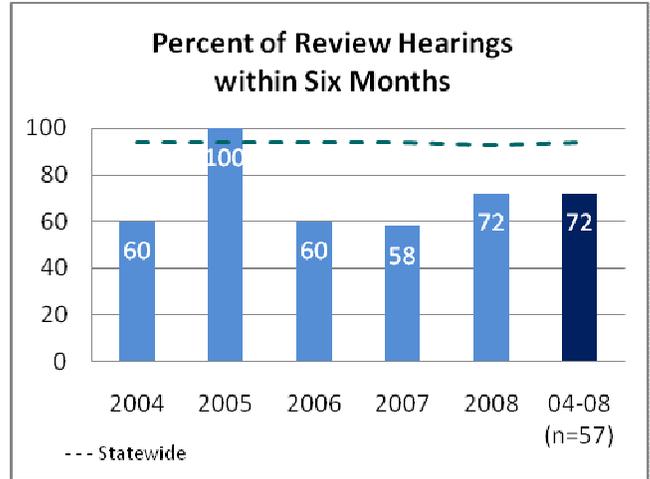
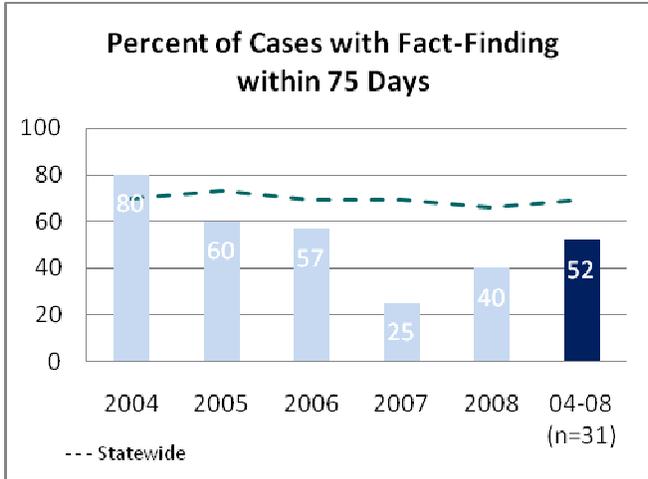
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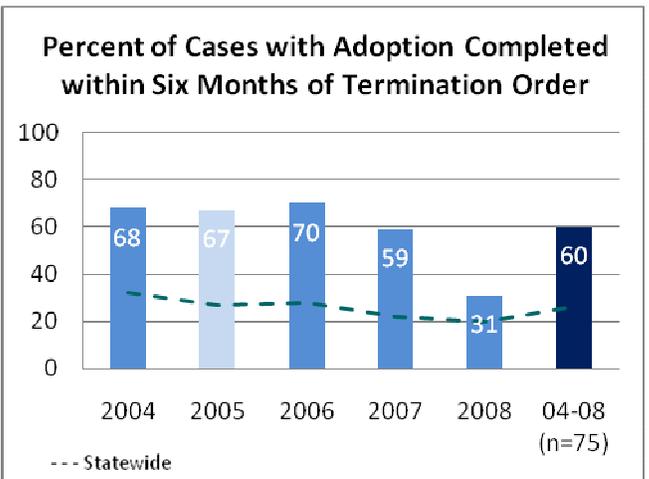
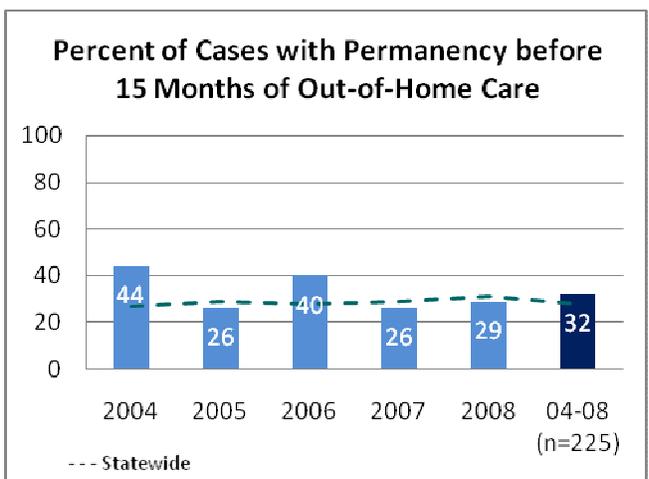
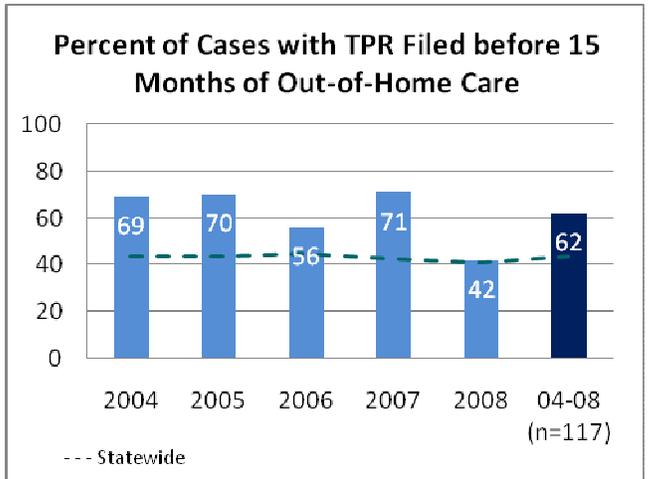
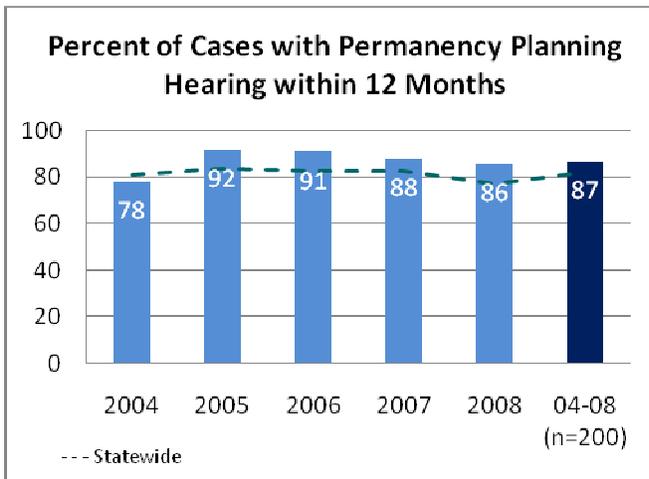
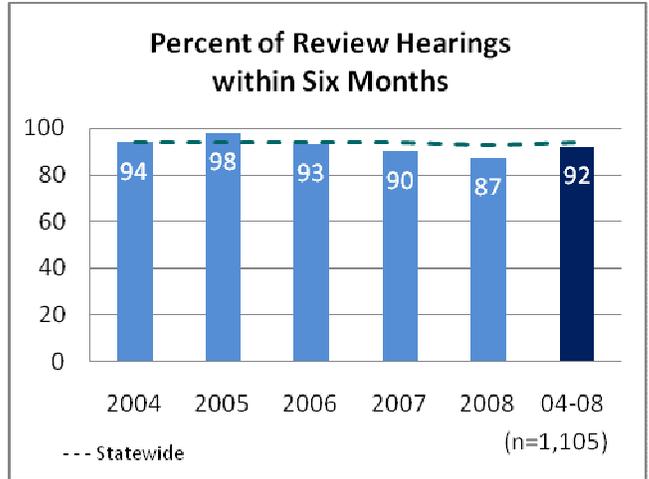
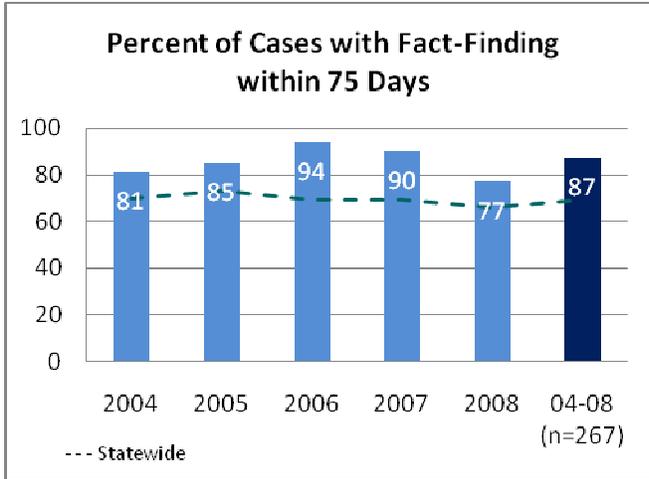
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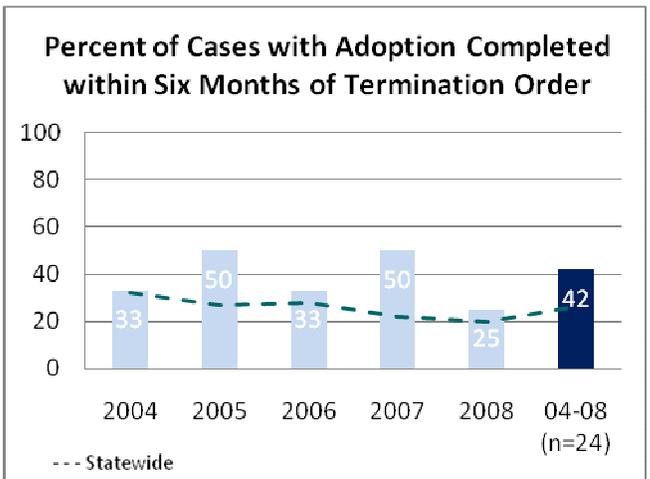
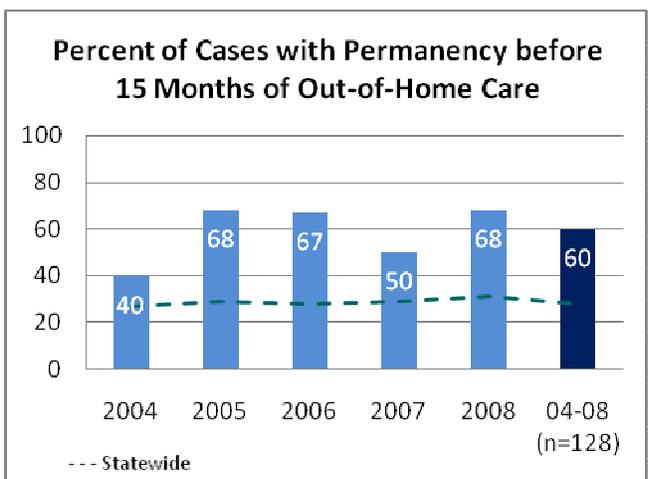
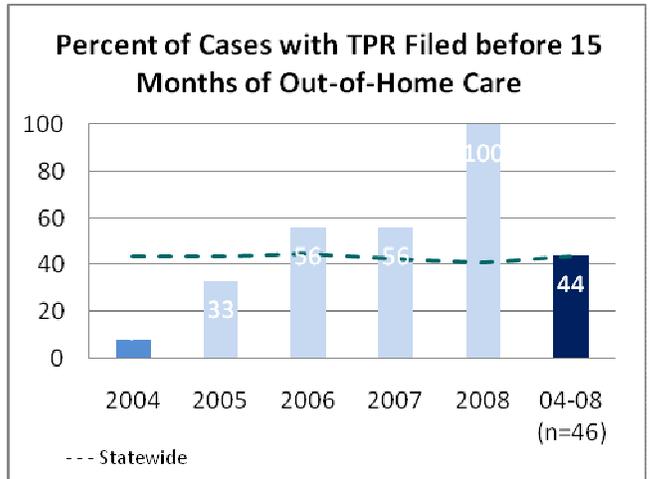
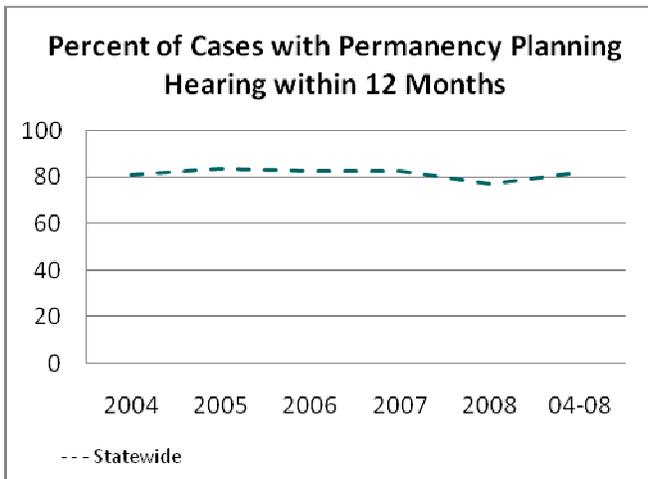
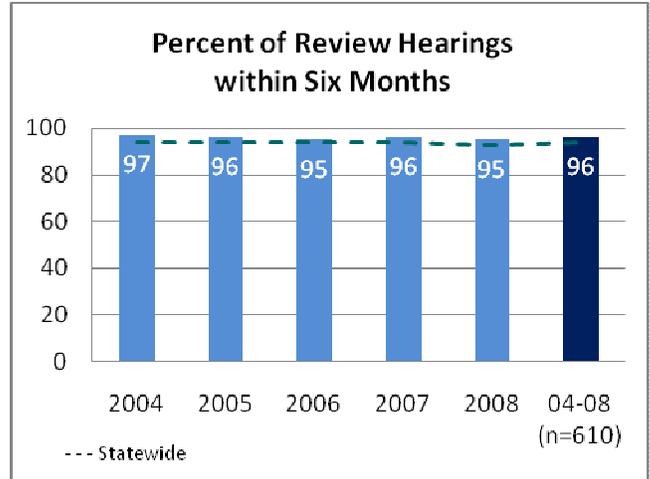
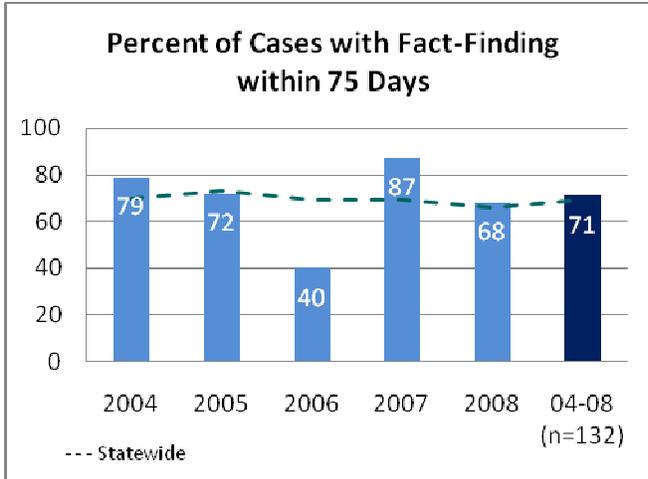
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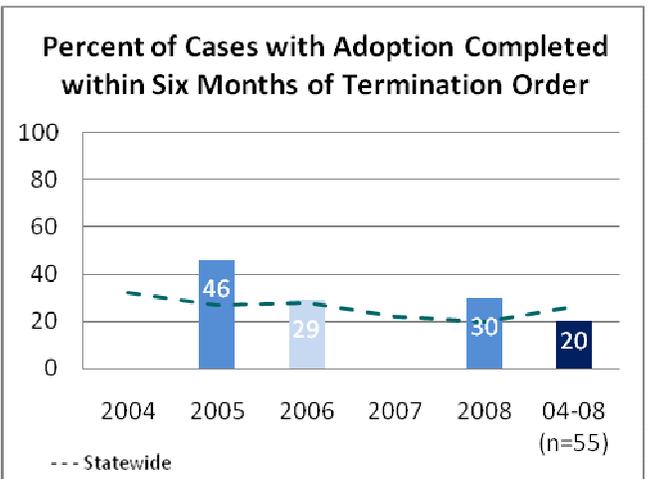
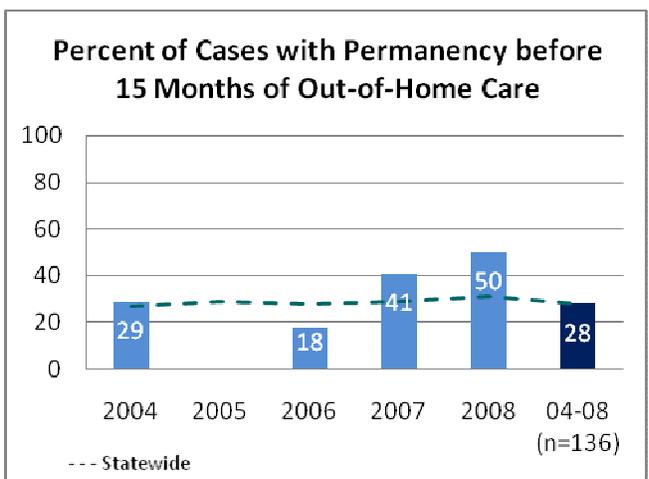
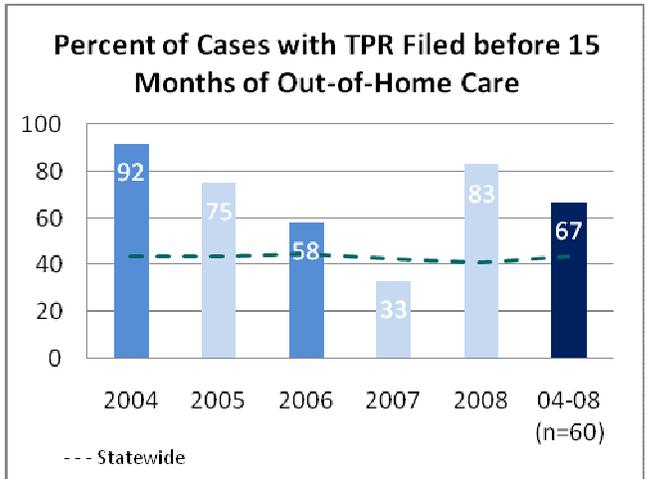
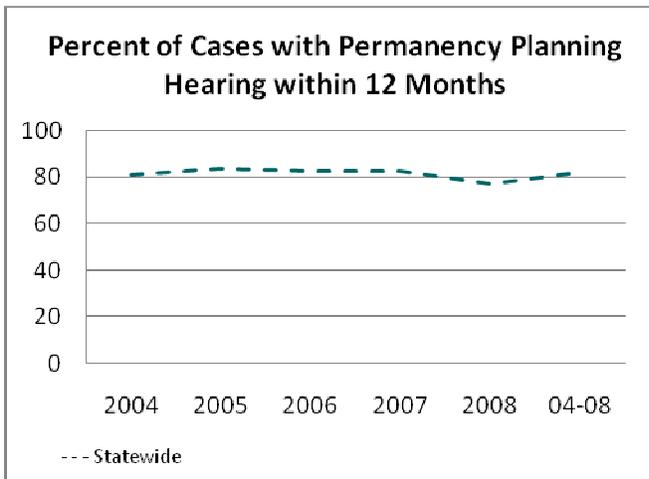
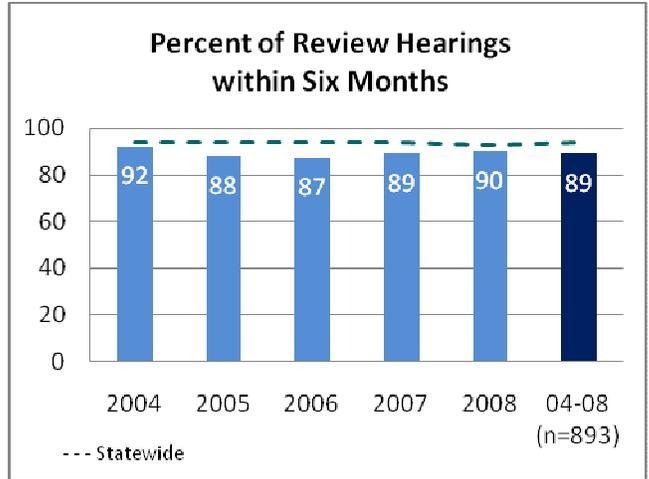
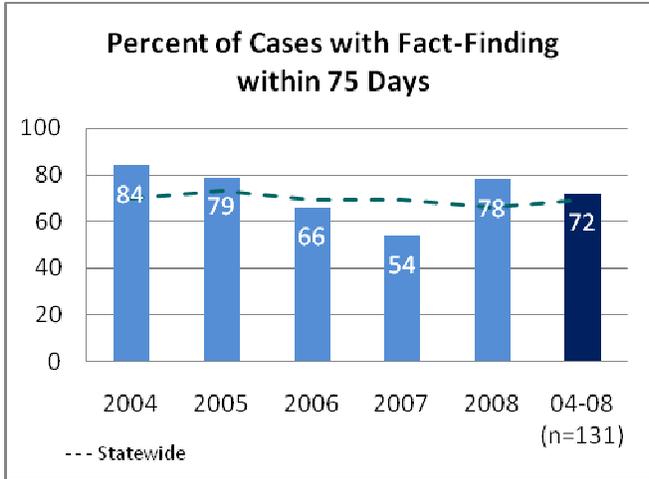
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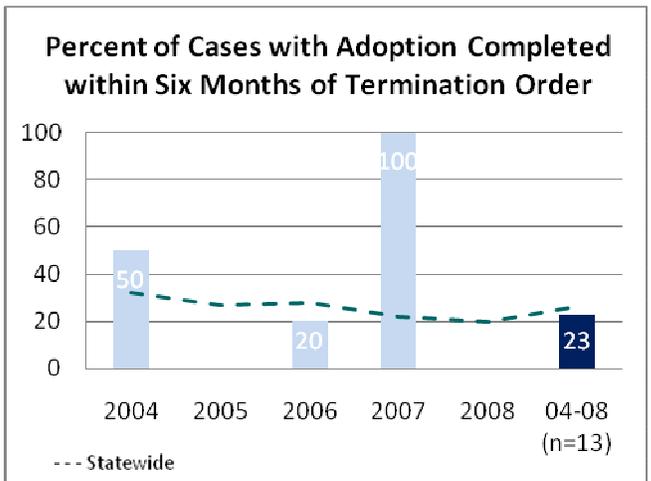
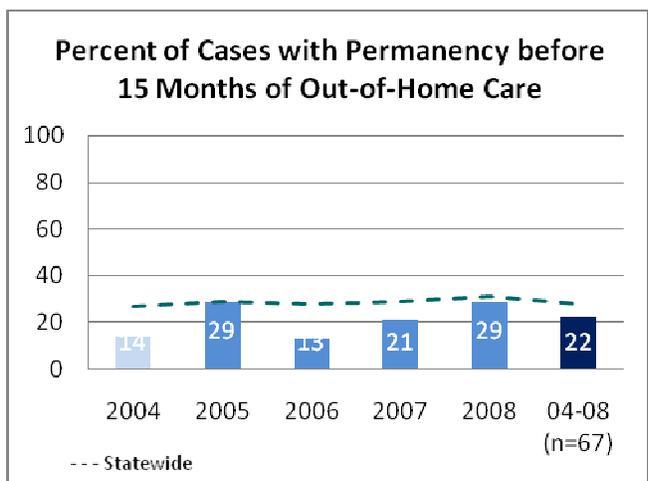
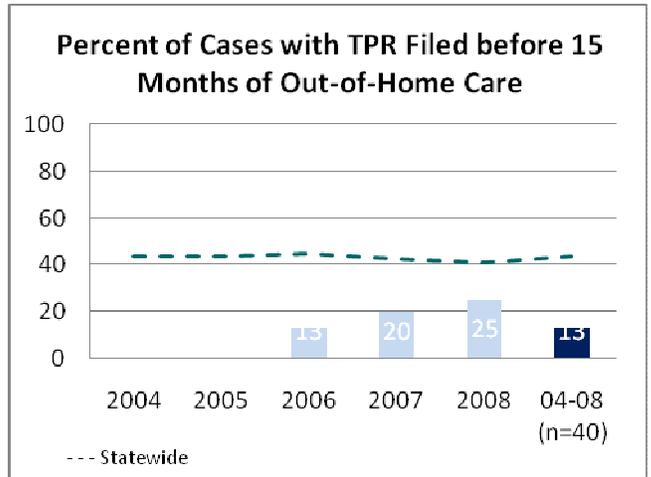
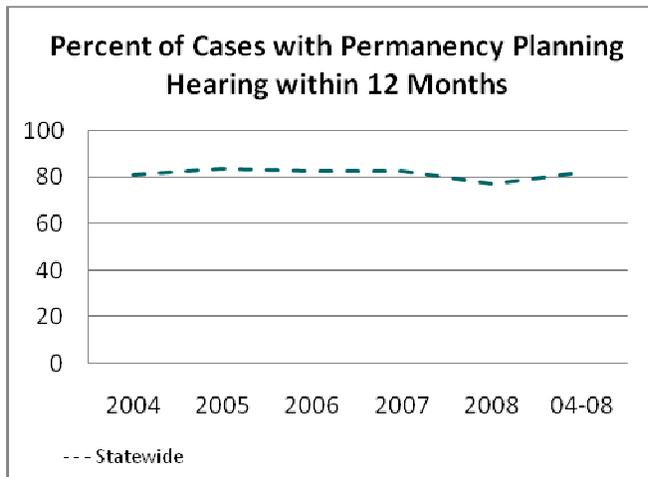
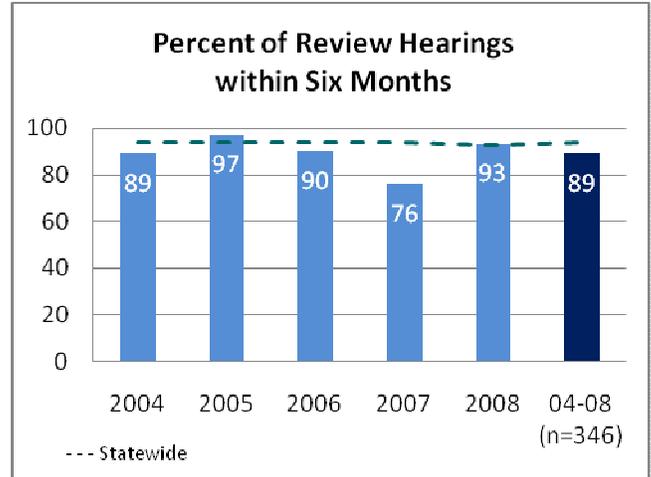
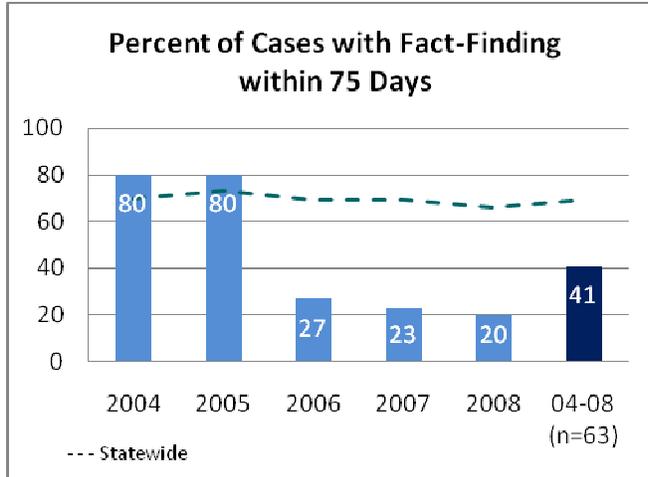
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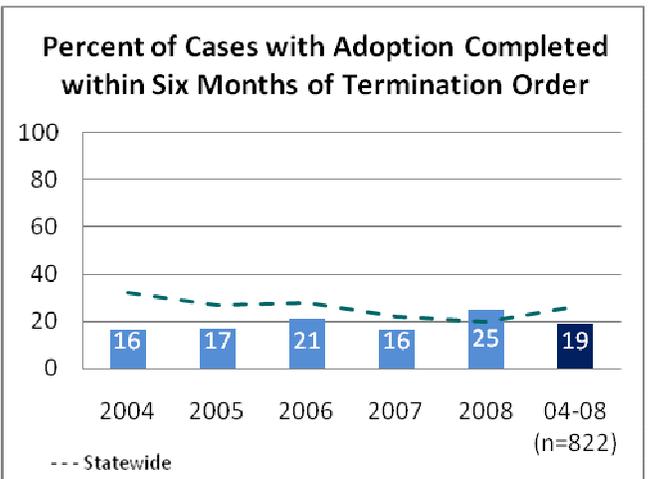
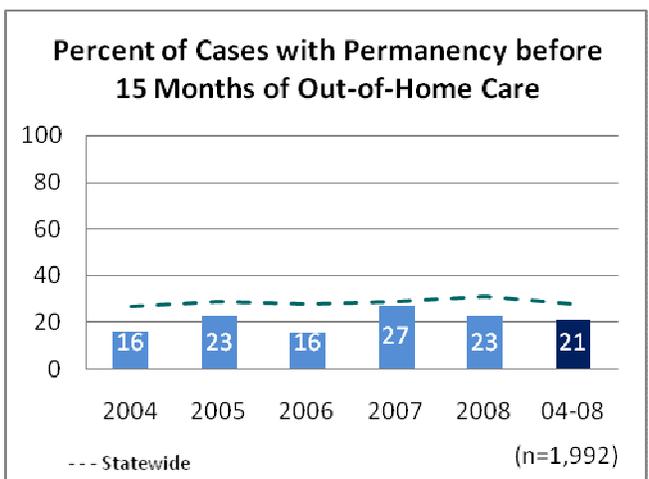
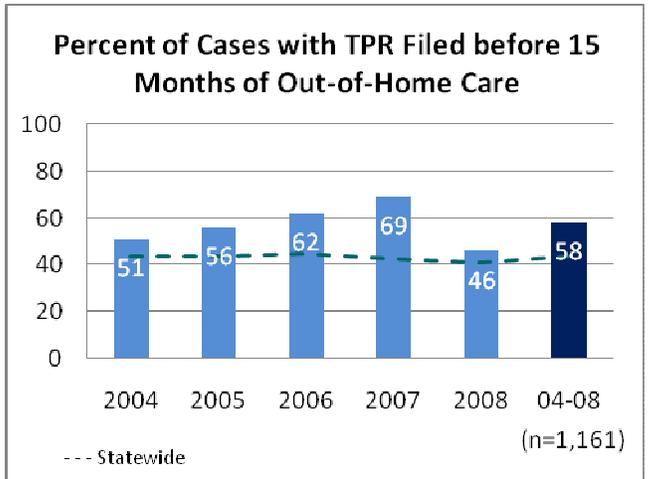
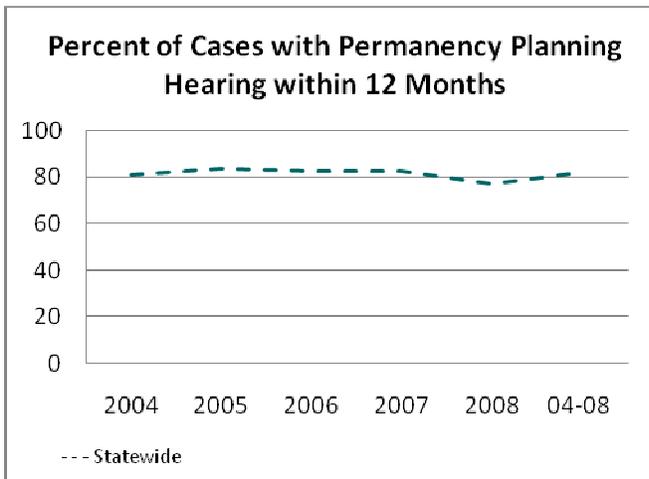
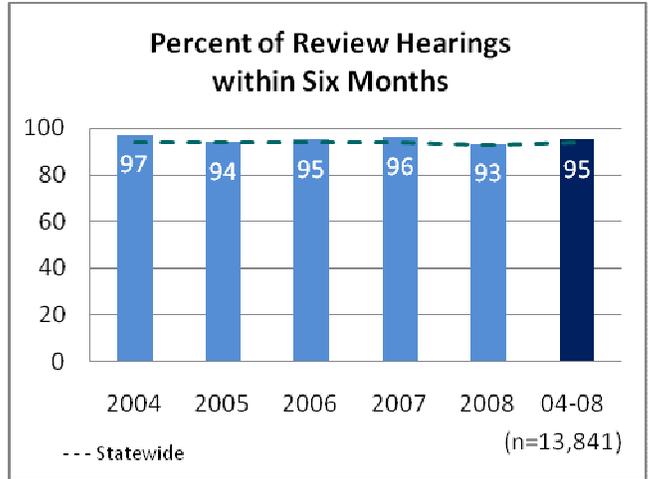
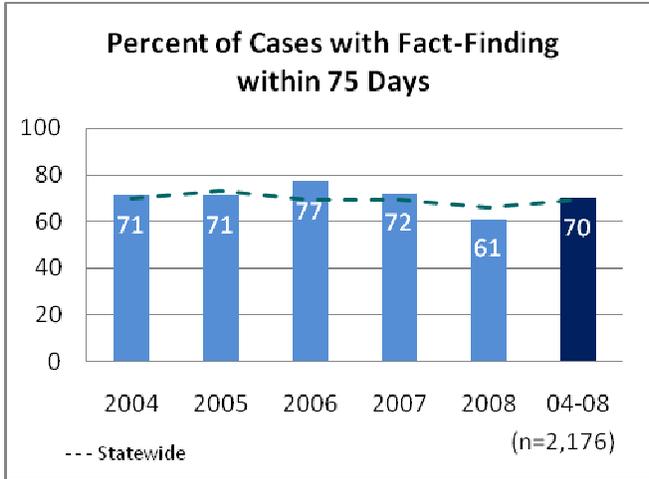
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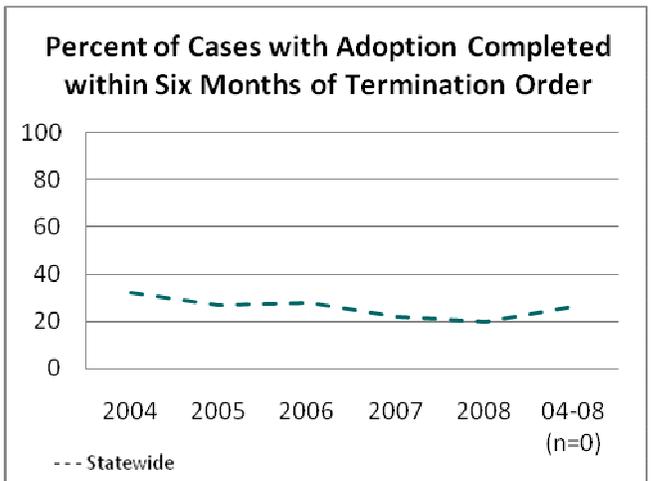
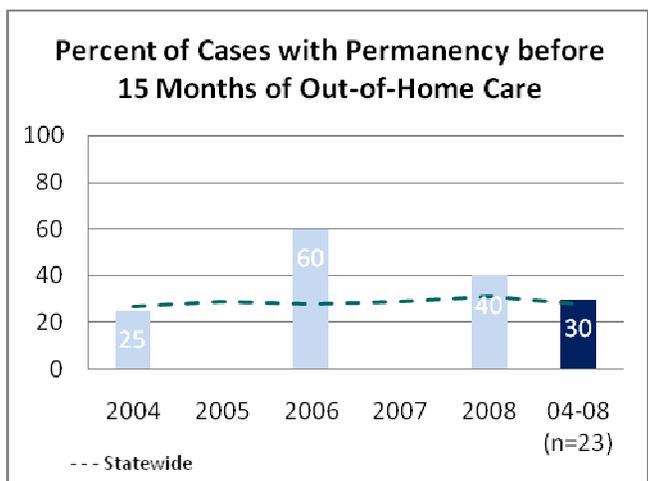
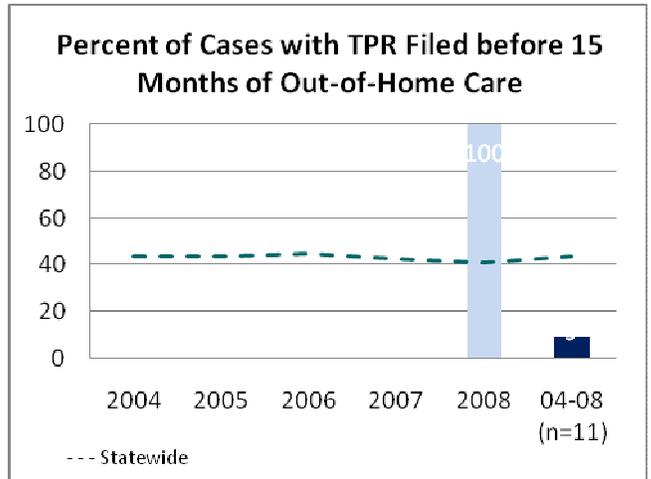
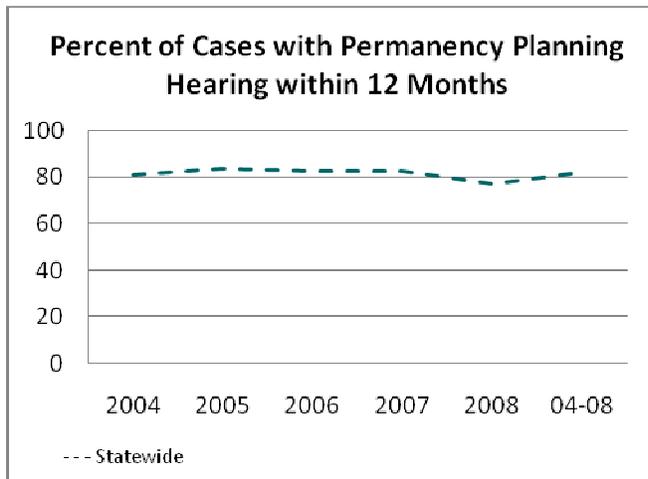
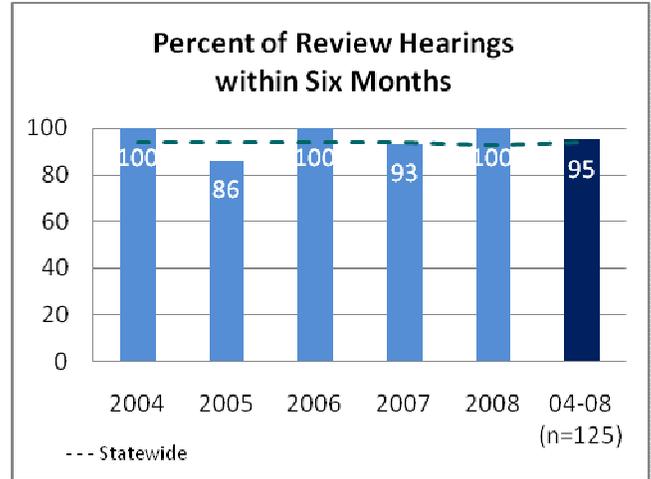
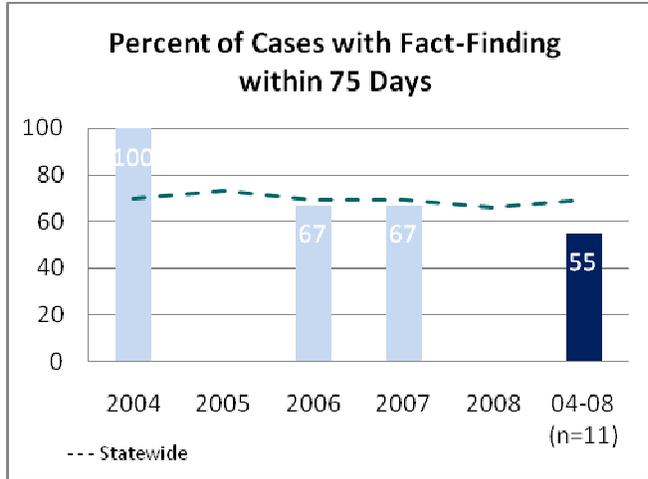
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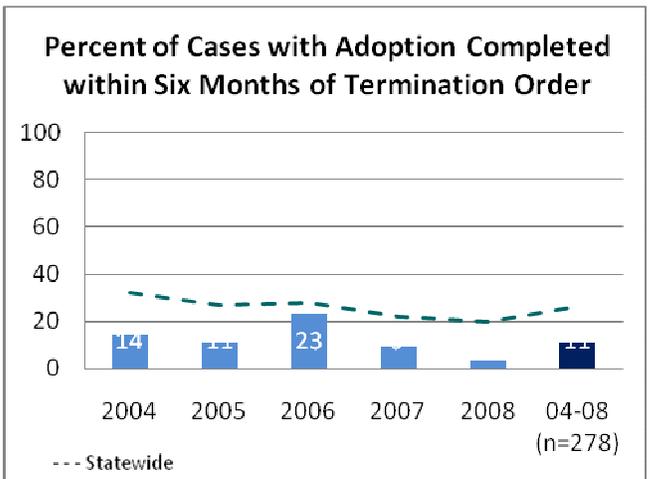
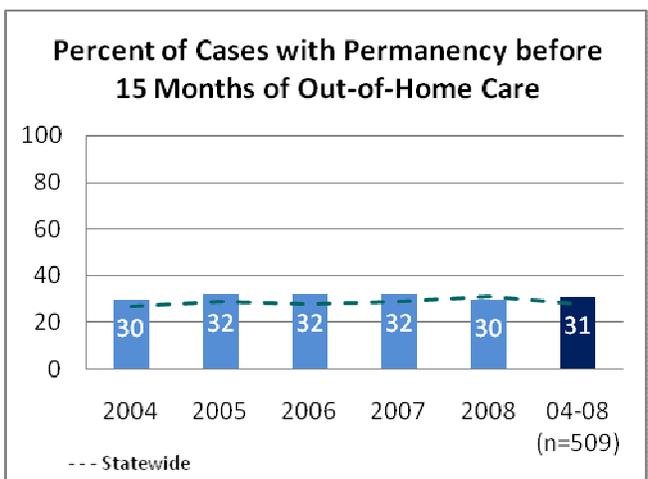
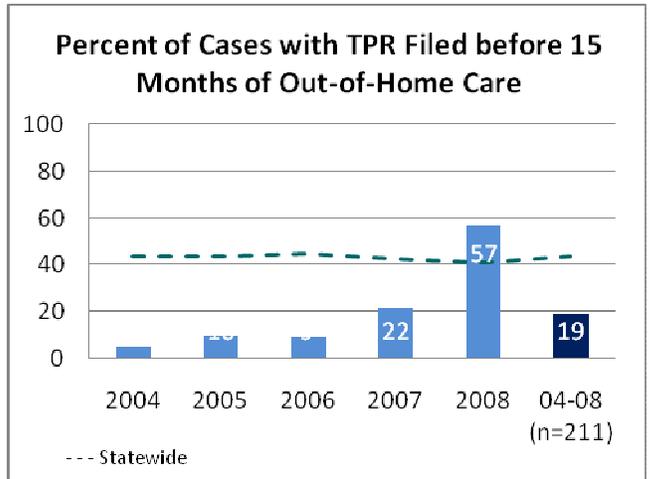
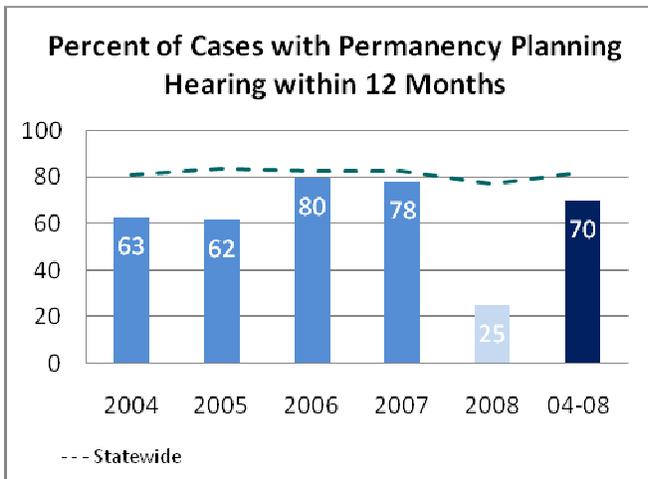
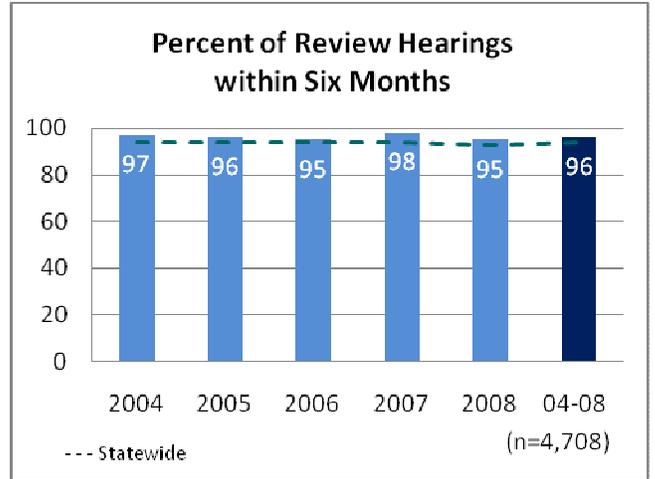
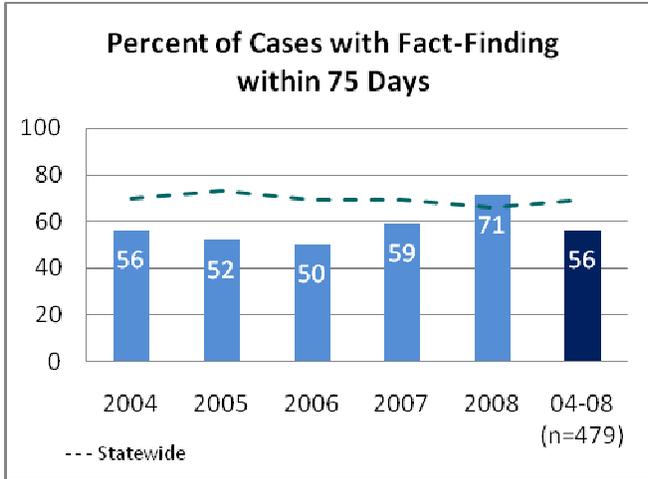
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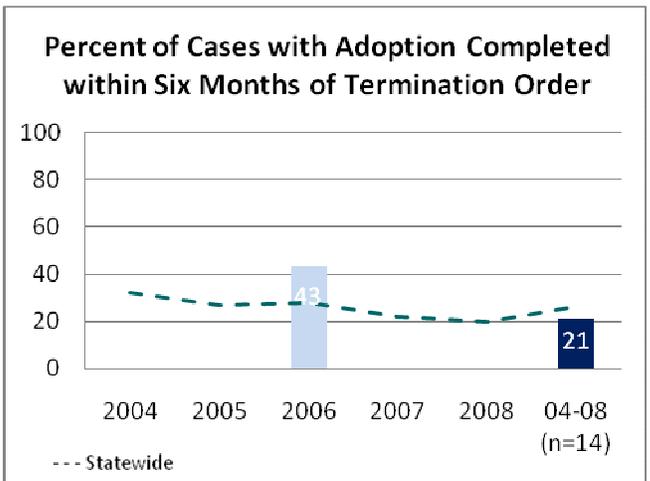
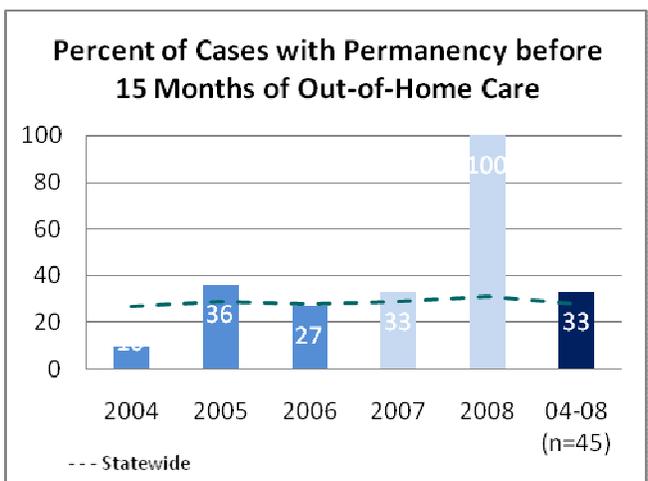
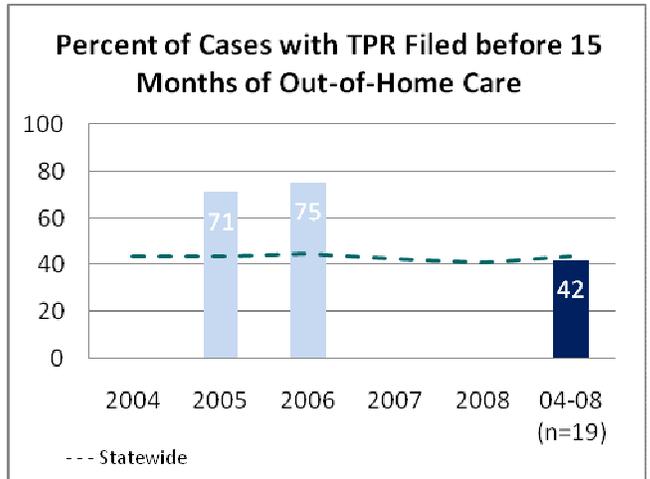
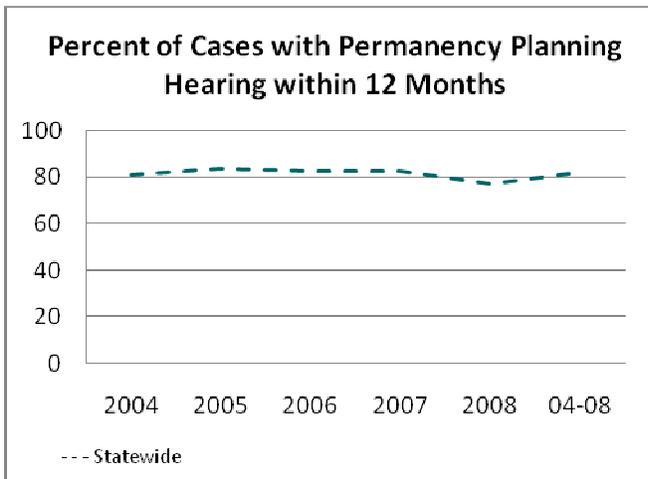
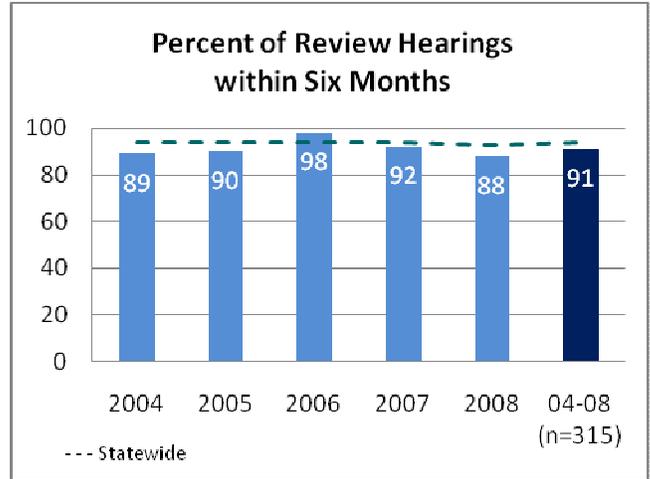
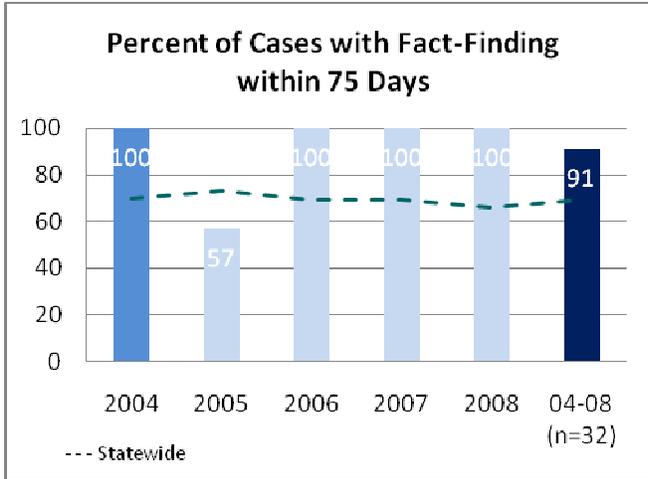
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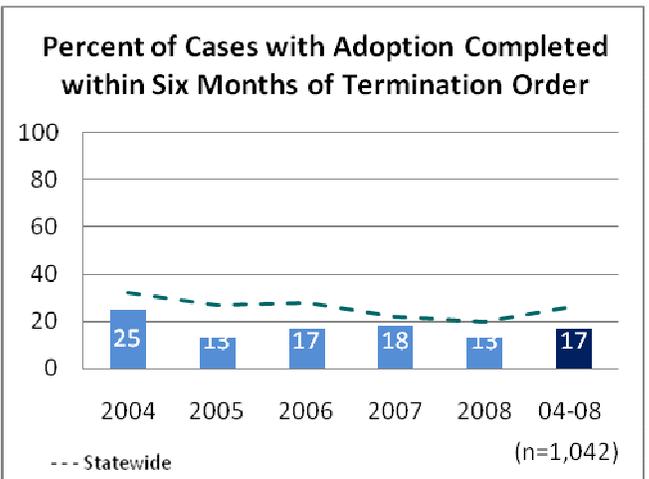
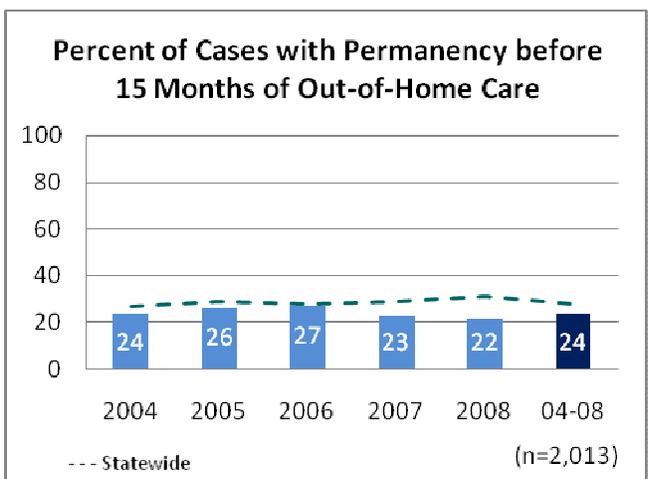
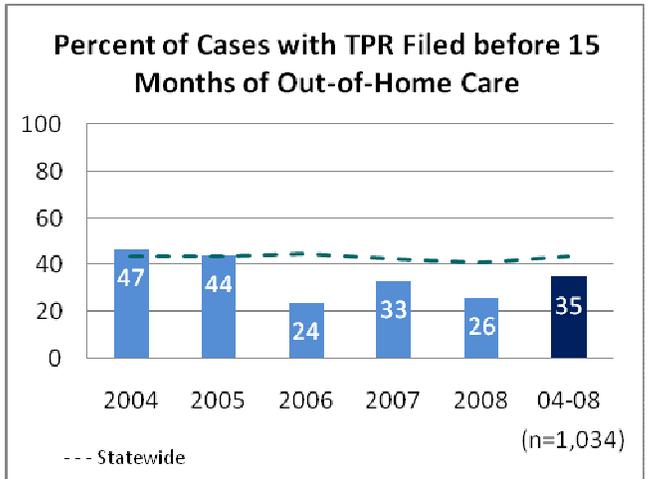
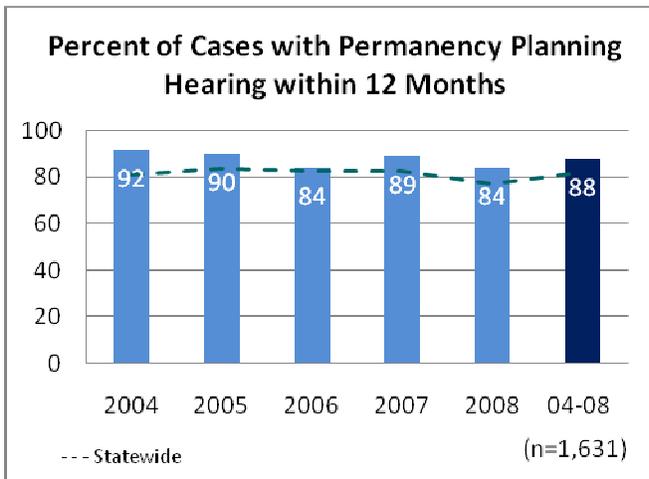
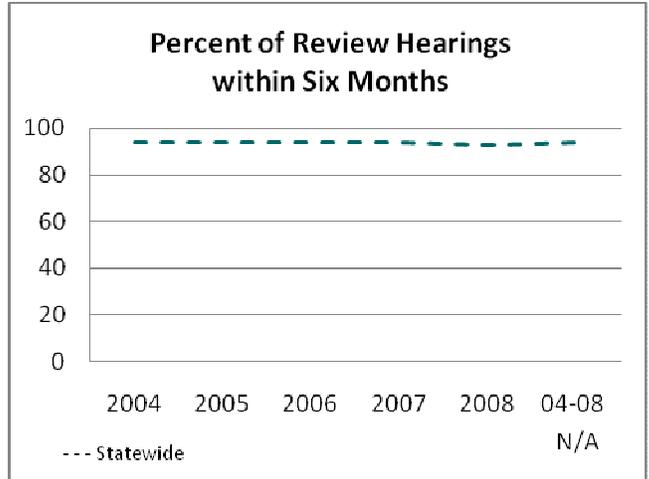
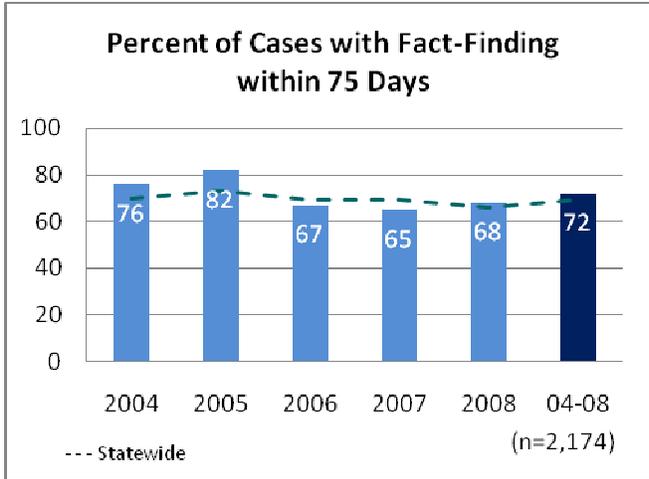
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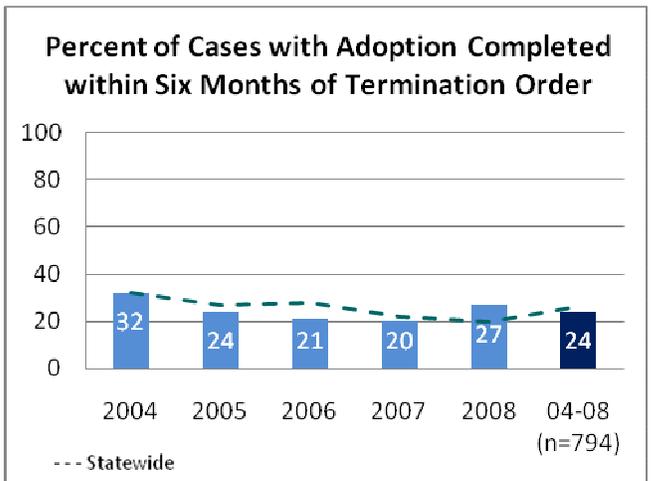
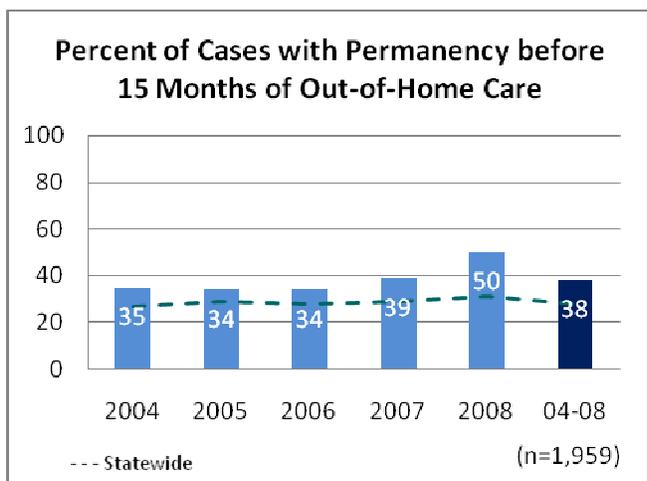
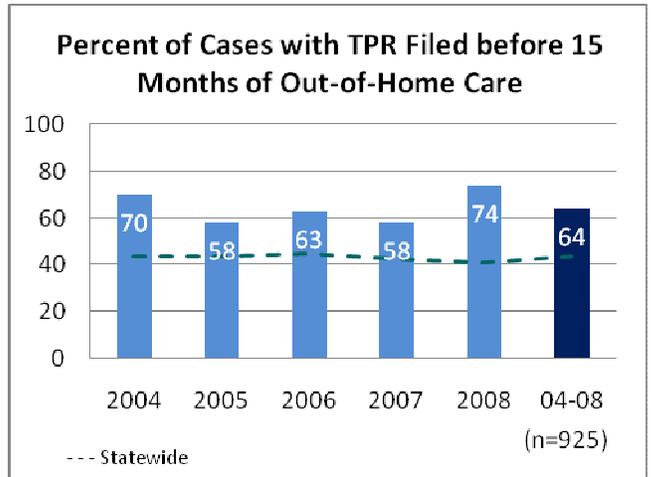
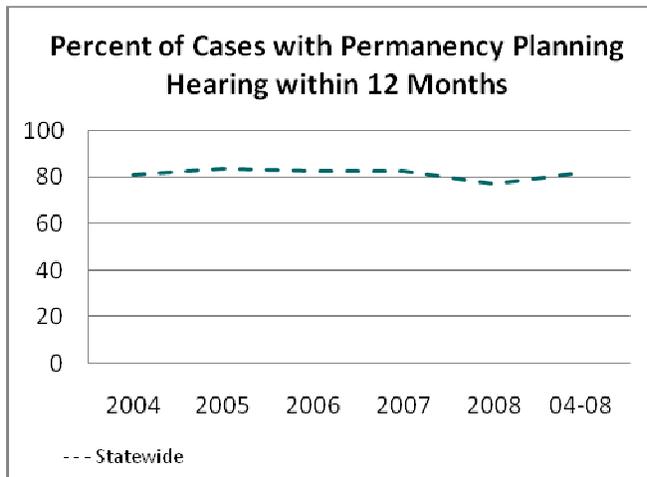
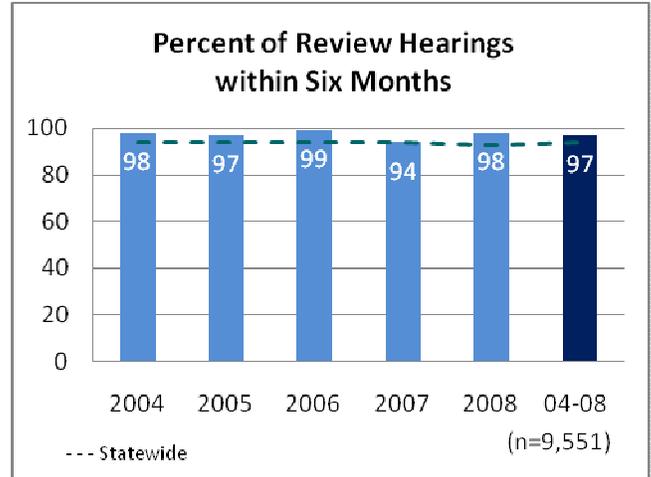
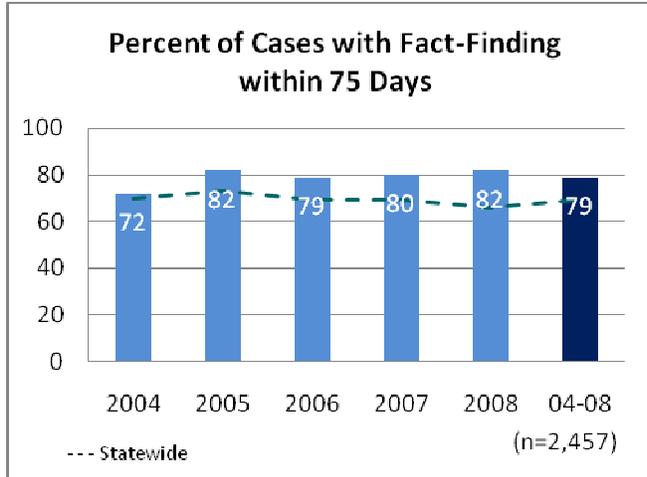
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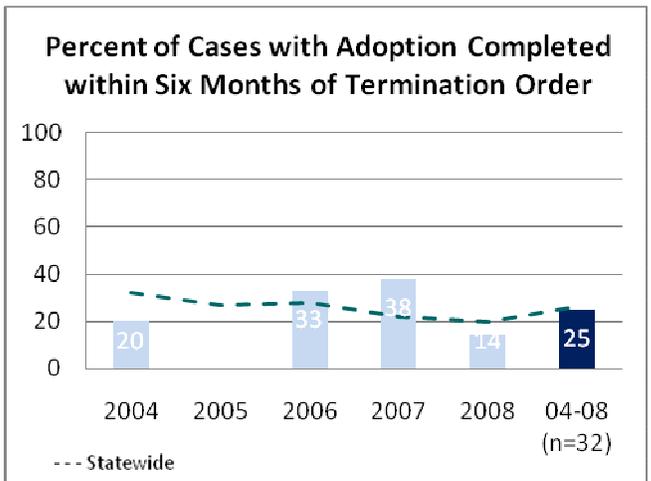
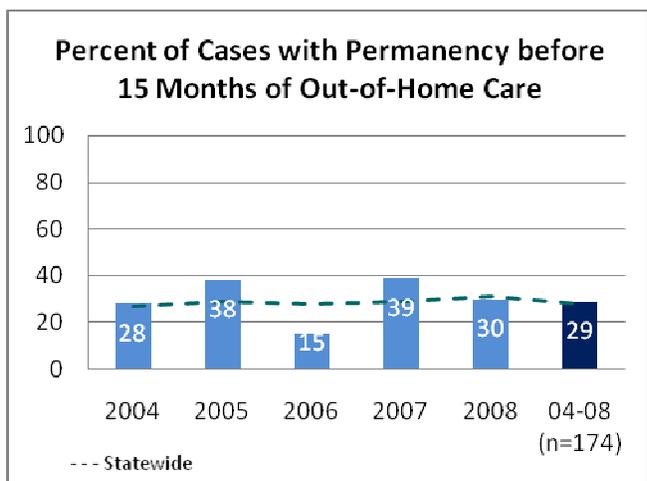
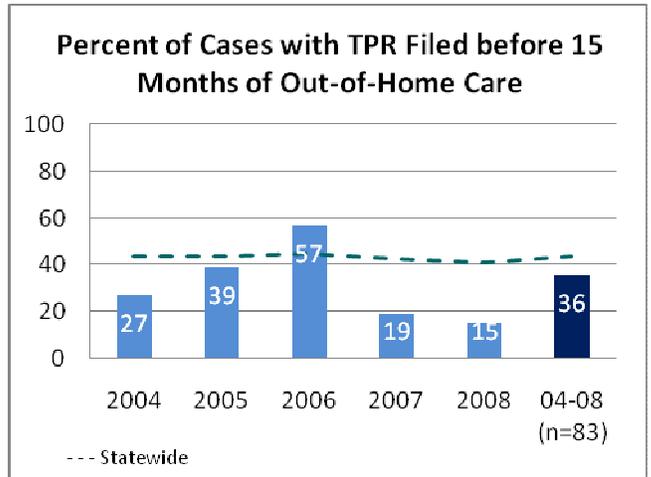
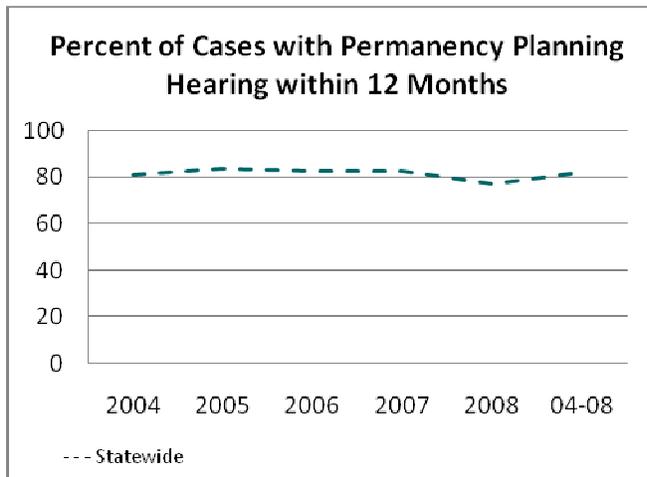
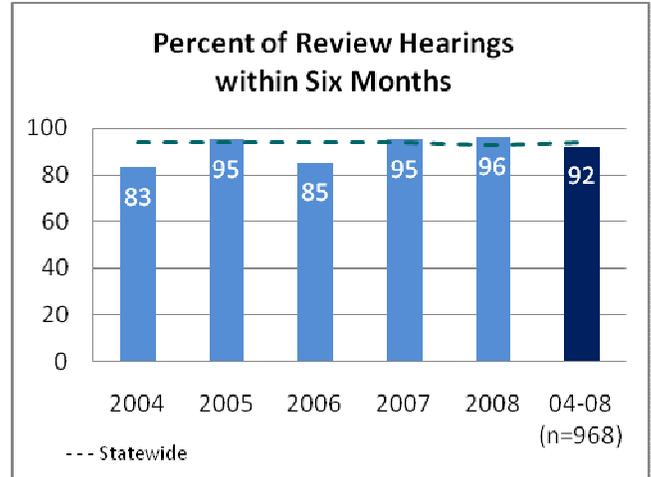
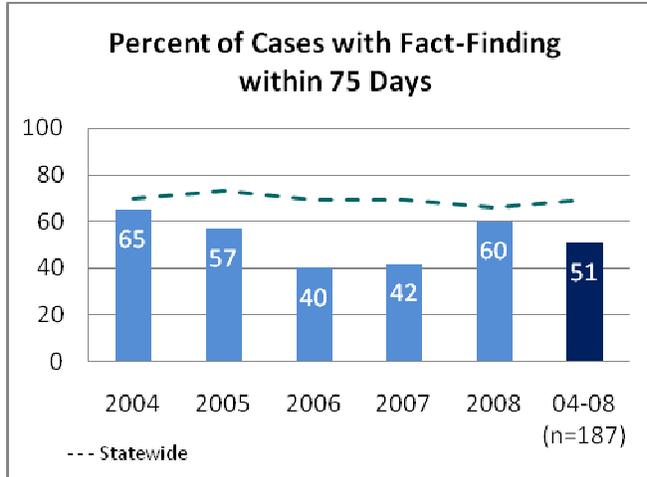
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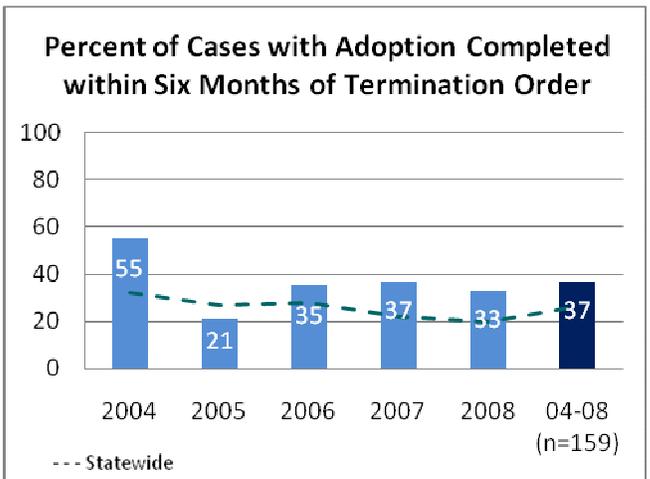
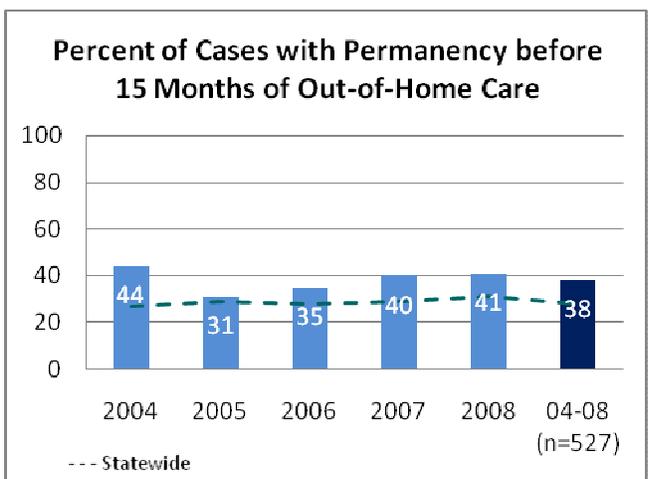
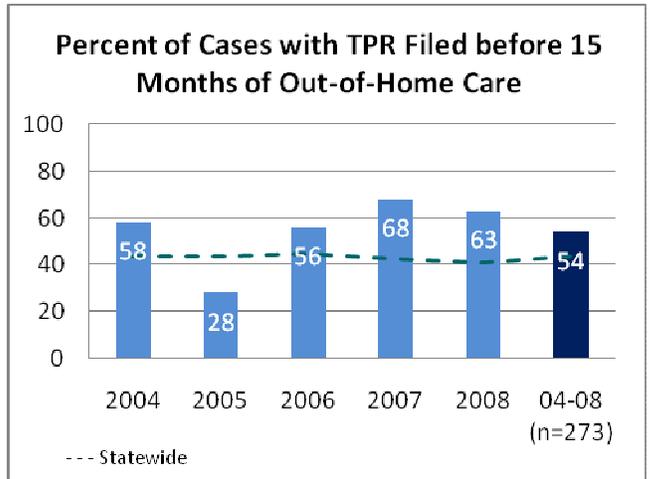
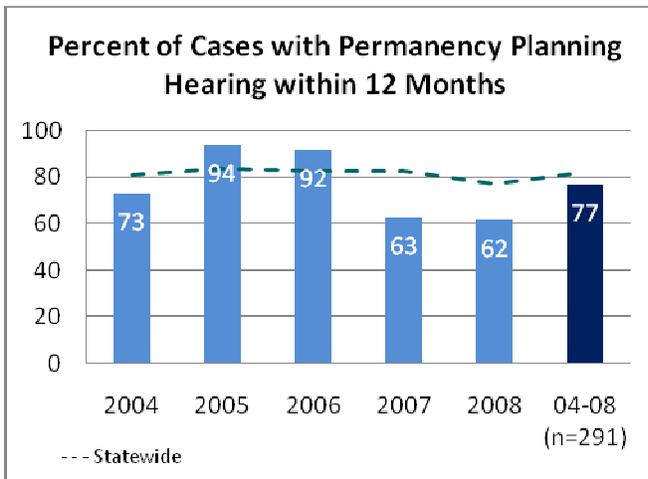
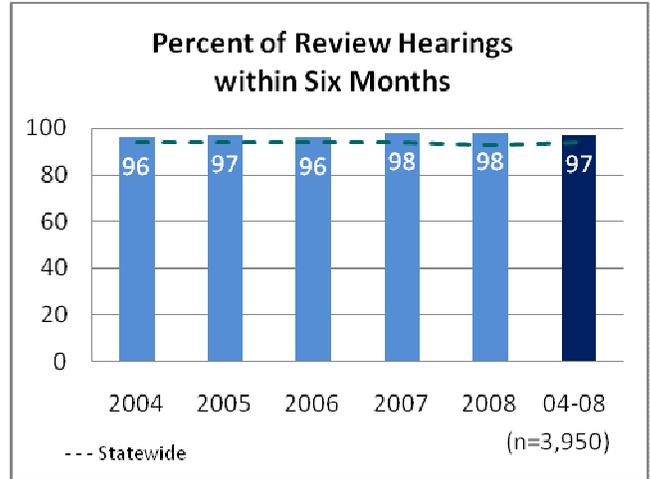
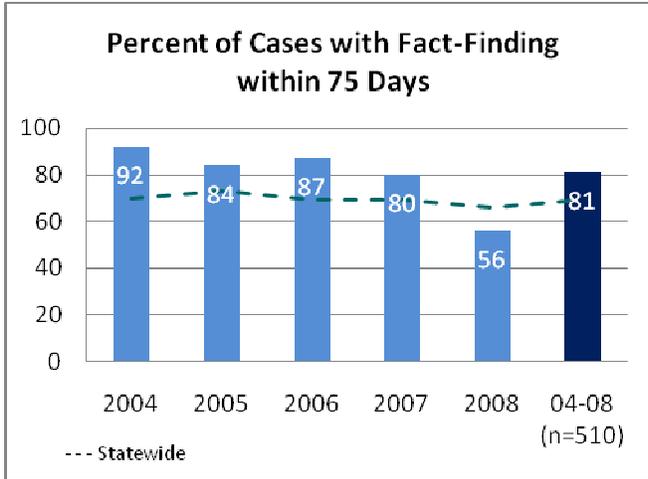
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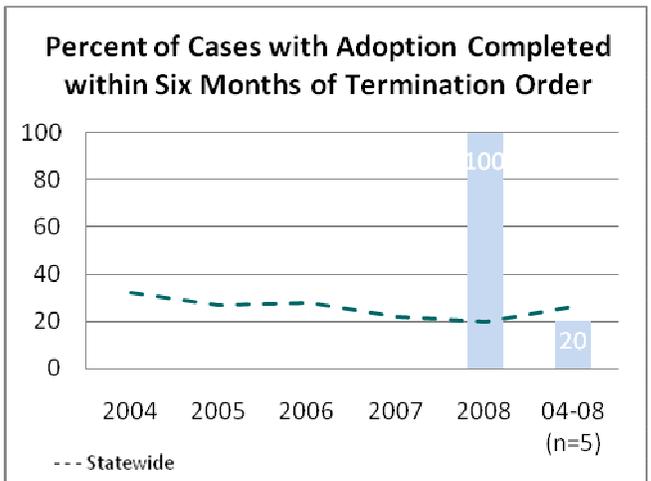
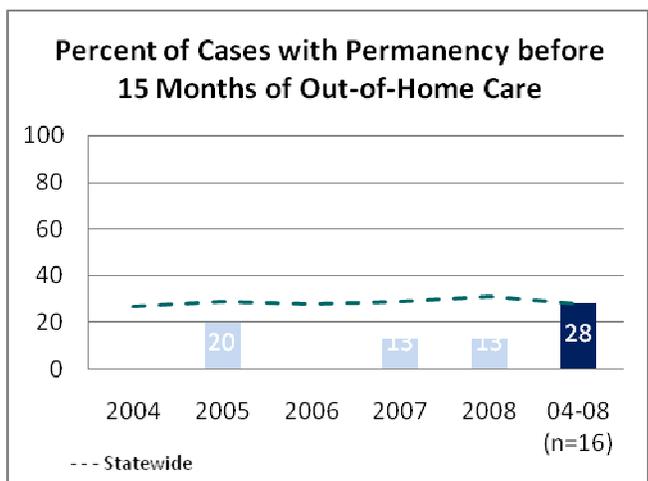
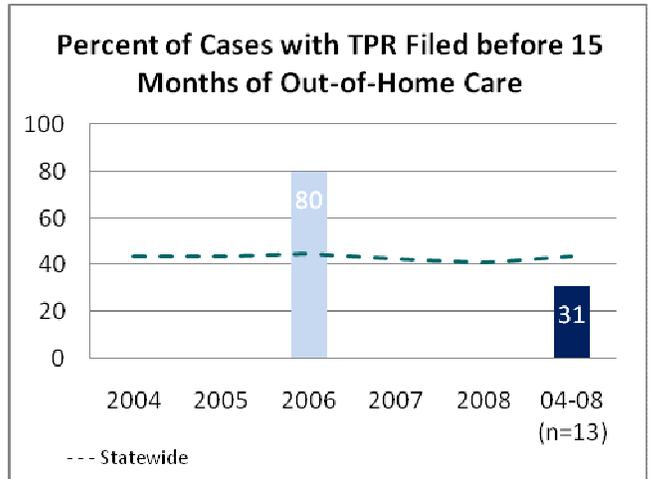
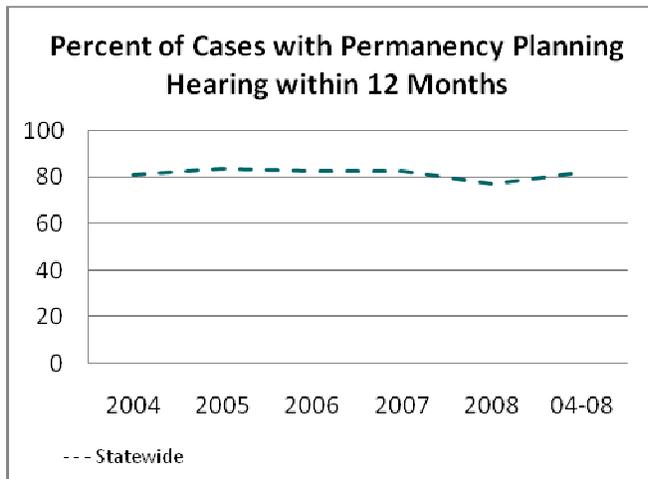
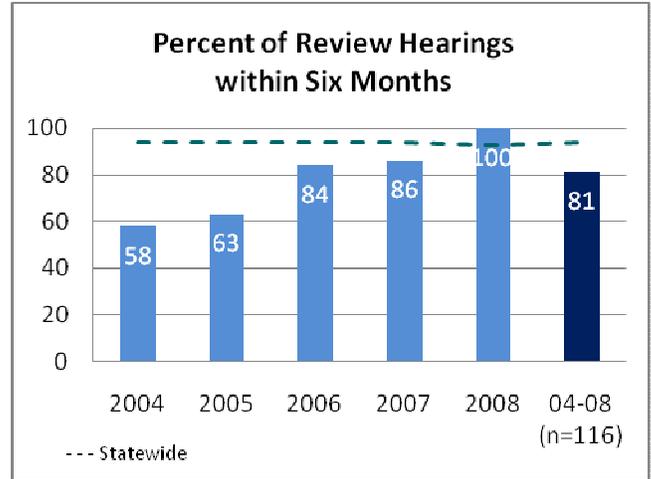
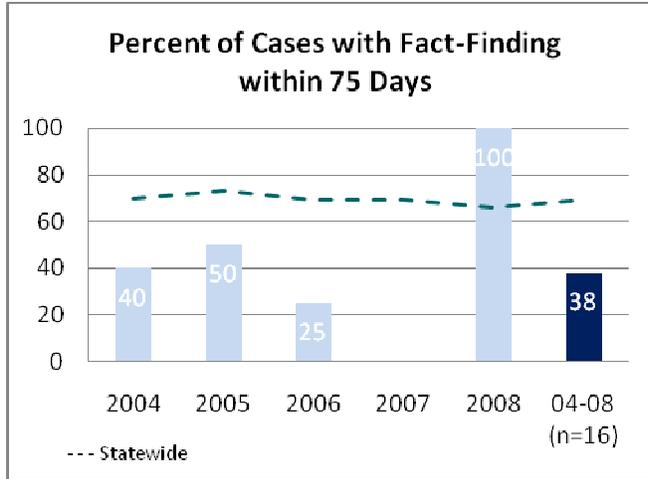
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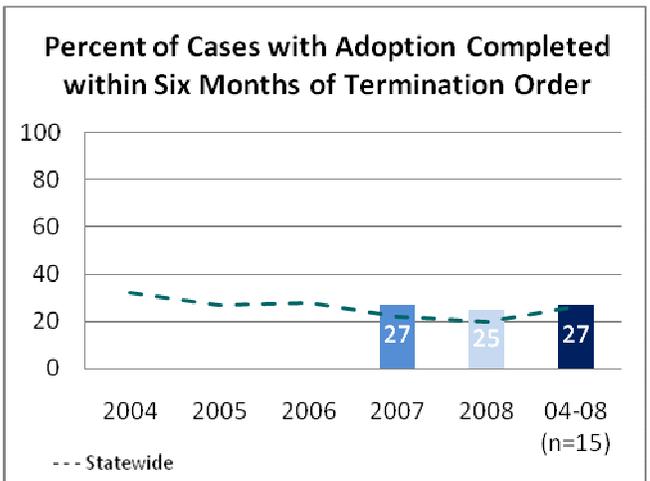
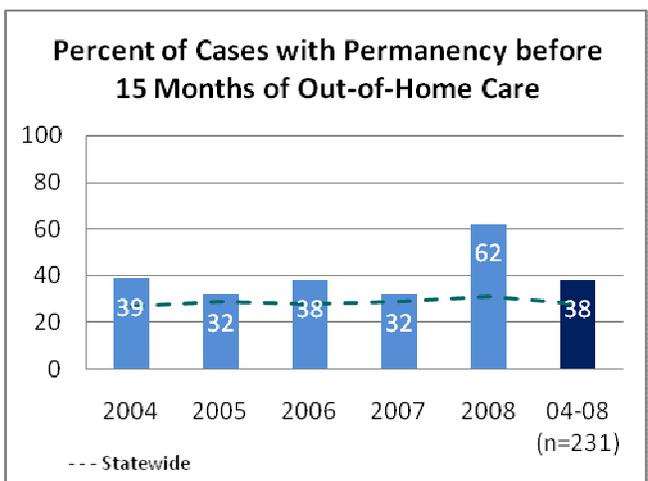
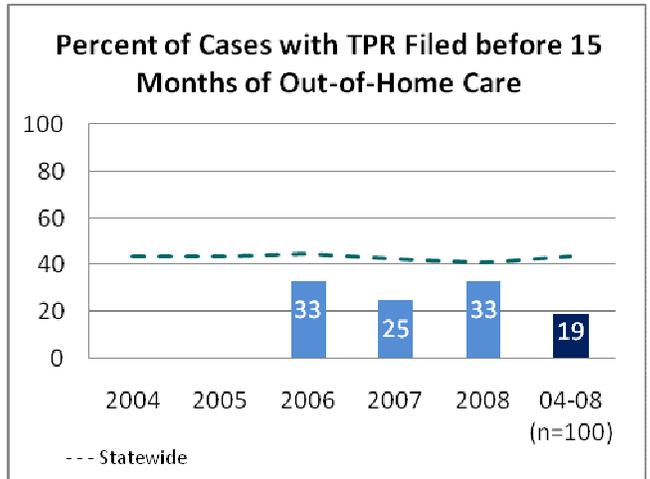
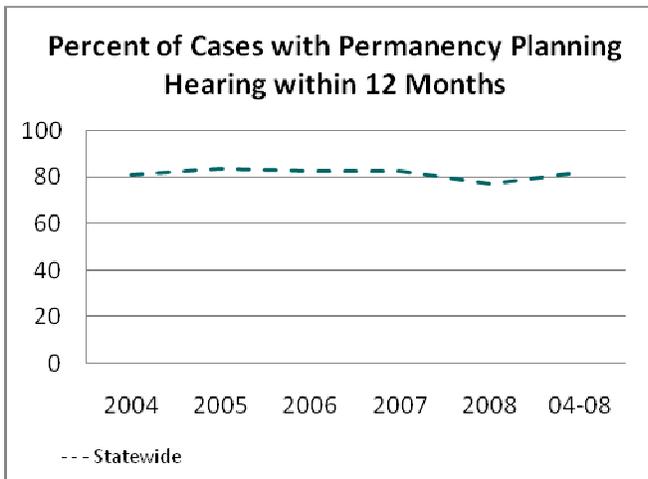
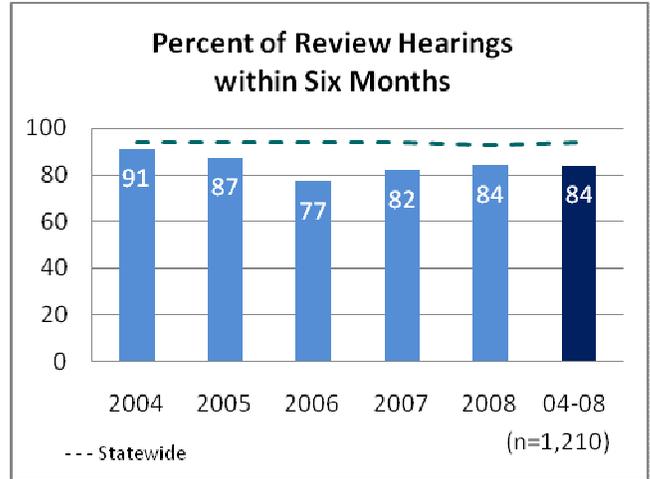
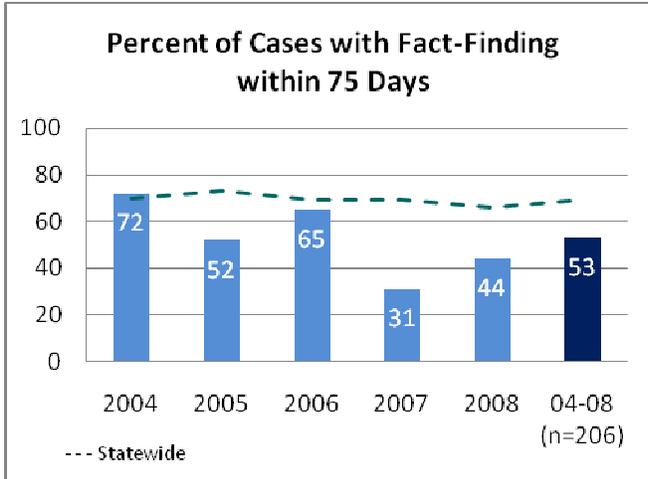
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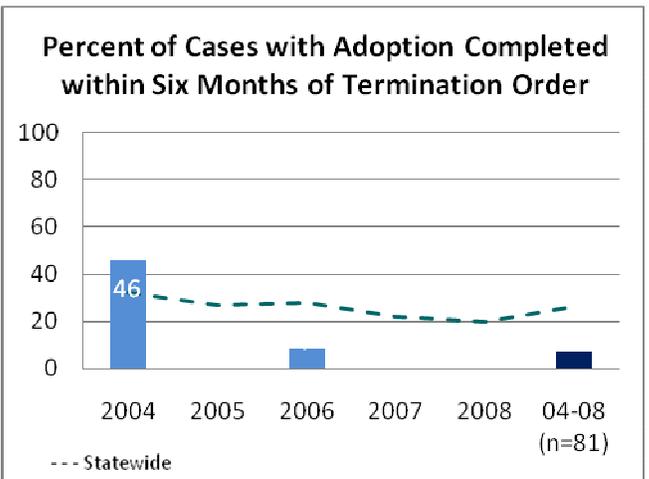
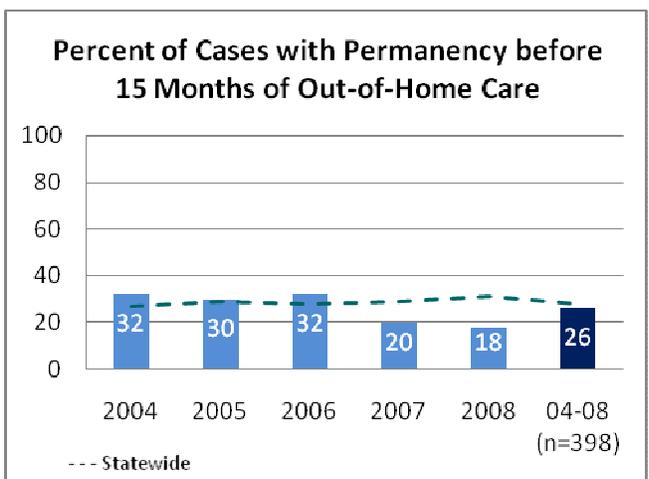
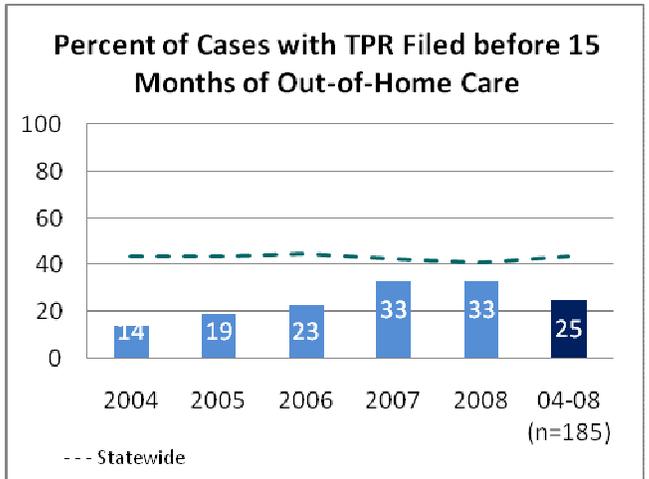
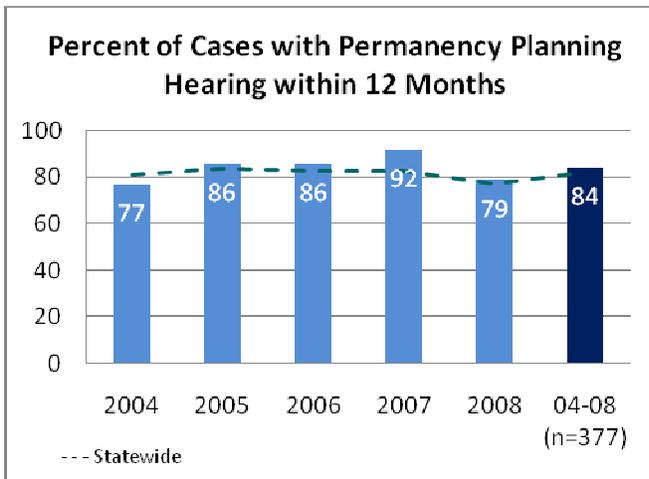
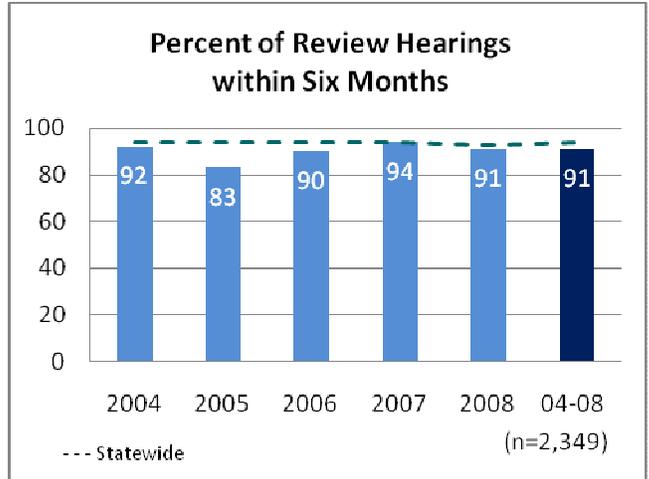
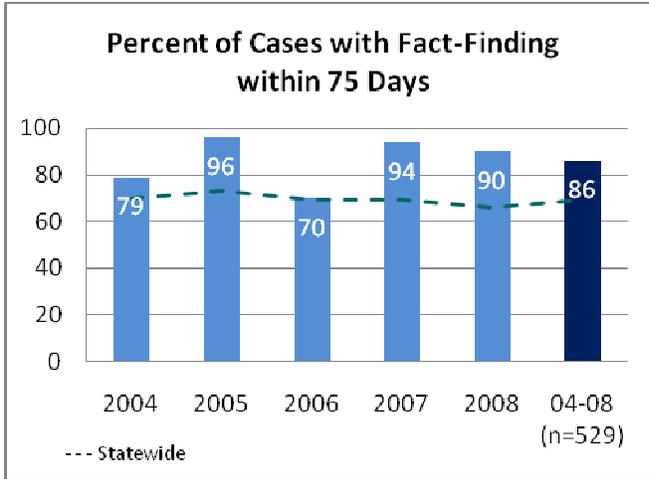
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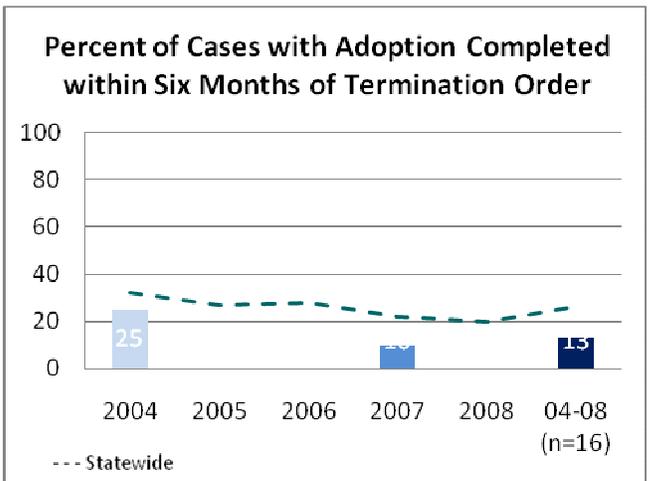
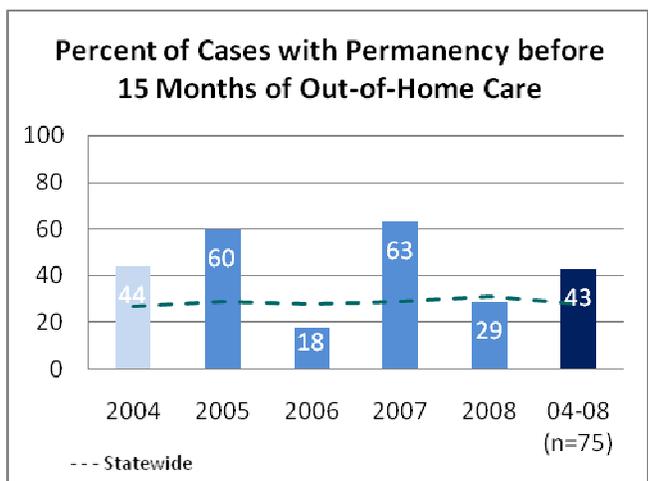
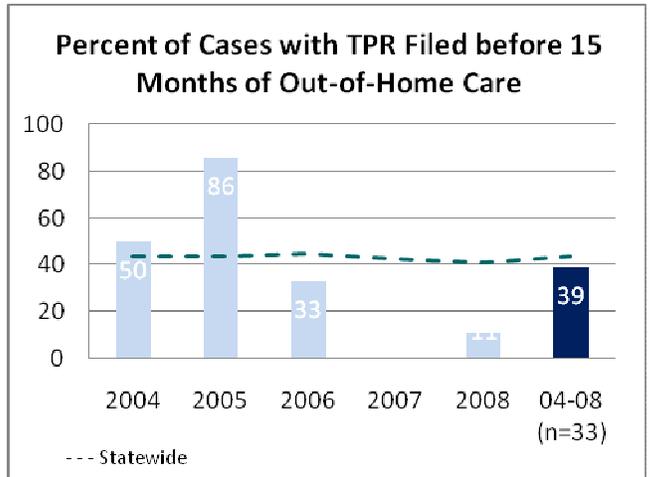
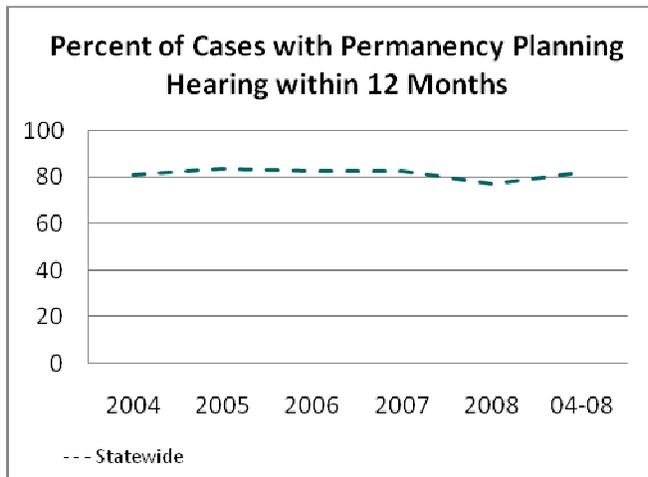
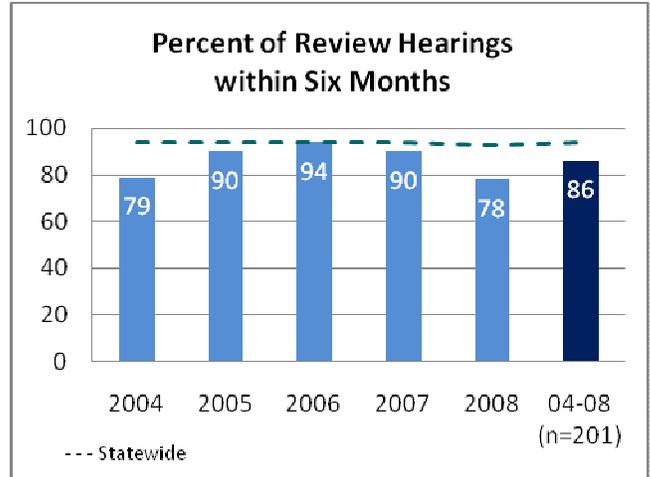
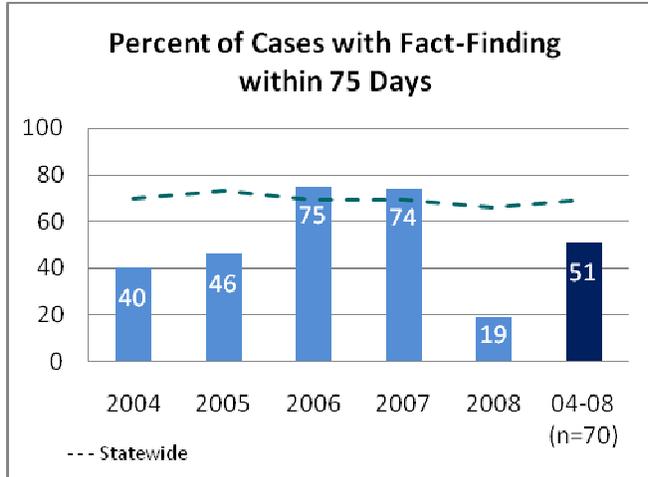
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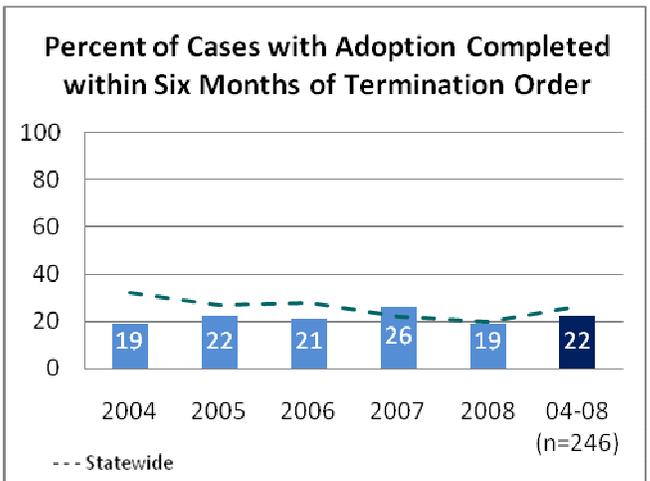
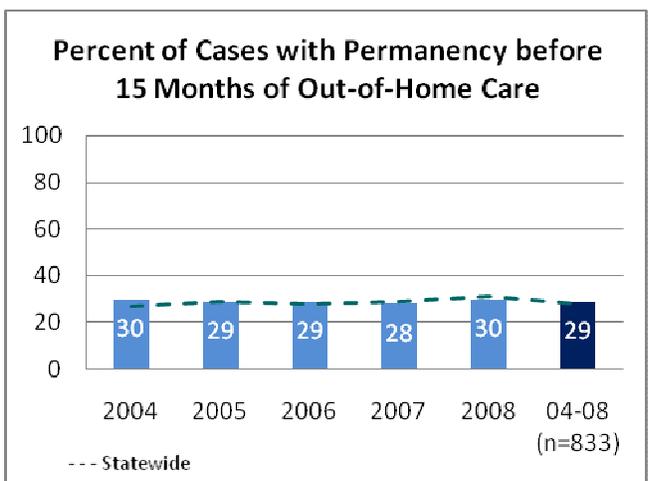
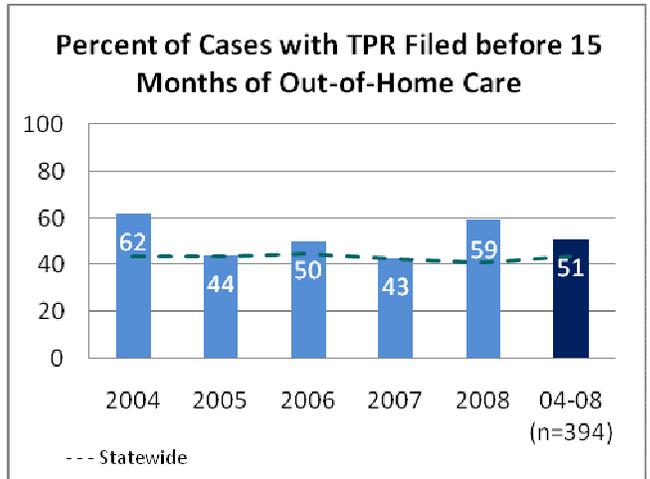
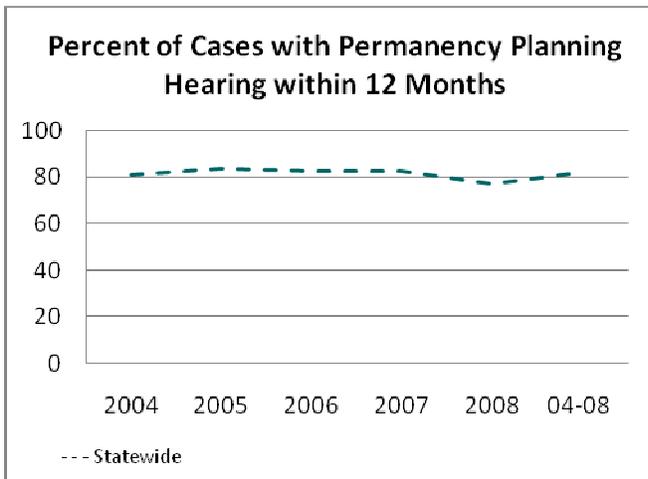
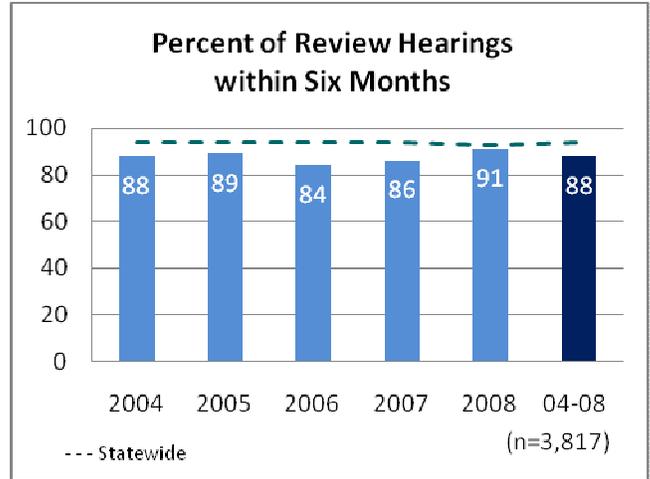
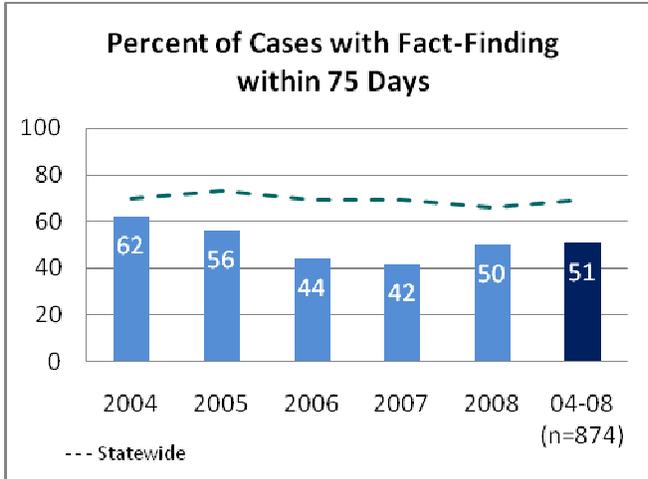
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## Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank Cindy Ellingson and Maija Morgenweck for their assistance with providing and interpreting data from the Children's Administration. We are also grateful for the comments and data validation efforts of numerous members of the court community throughout the state, including clerks, clerks' staff, court administrators, and judicial officers.

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